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Christian school principal eats worms to promote reading

Marian Van Til

HOLLAND MARSH, Ont. — Thanks to CBC Radio *Morningside* host Peter Gzowski, people across Canada now know that the Holland Marsh District (Ontario) Christian School will do anything to get its students to read, including making principal Henry Lise eat worms.

Lise kept a promise he had made to the school's 312 students by munching down a large worm live on Gzowski's radio show on May 29. Lise was live, not the worm, which was nicely fried in butter and garlic.

Why would he do such a thing? Well, it started with last year's principal, Corrie Bootsma, who kissed a pig. And why would *she* do such a thing?

Blame it on the enthusiasm of resource (special ed) teacher and accelerated reading co-ordinator Lettie Hall and the ardent zeal of virtually all of the kids in grades one through eight.

Back to books, not TV

The accelerated reading (AR) program which Hall instituted uses a computerized program developed by Avantage Learning Systems in Wisconsin Rapids, Wisconsin. It gets kids to read classics and other good books outside of class time. From a computerized list kids choose books appropriate to their level. Then for each book they read, they take a test on the computer which asks them questions about the story, assessing their comprehension level.

Hall explains that points are assigned for how well kids do on each test, and for how difficult the book is. Thus, last year the overall school goal was 6,000 points, or about 2,000 books. Corrie Bootsma had told last-year's students that if they met that goal, she would kiss a pig. The goal was exceeded by 1,000 points, so Bootsma and the pig puckered up.

Bizarre heroics

There are a number of Ontario Christian schools that use the Avantage Learning Systems AR

See **WORM-EATING** *p. 2...*

Henry Lise takes the bait

Ancaster refugee sponsorship breakdown leads to warning

Bert Witvoet

HAMILTON, Ont. — The Christian Reformed World Relief Committee has sent out a letter of caution to various CRC diaconates regarding "brokered" sponsorships of refugees. A brokered sponsorship is one in which the church sponsors a refugee family or individual on behalf of relatives who promise to assume responsibility for the settlement of that family or individual.

The letter of caution came after a brokered sponsorship by Ancaster CRC failed amidst much damaging media coverage. The *Hamilton Spectator*, for example, ran a front-page story on a pregnant Somali widow with nine children, "stuck in a dumpy storefront apartment," reportedly the victim of a conflict between Ancaster Christian Reformed Church and the Somali community. The Hamilton Somali community has accused the church of racism and of failing to live up to its agreement with the government.

A tale of deception

Rick DeGraaf, CRWRC's coordinator of Church Relations and Domestic Ministries tells a different story. He showed this reporter letters signed by four of the widow's Somali relatives in Toronto who promised to support the woman, Hodan Mohamed, 31, and her nine children for nine years. Another letter signed by a Somali restaurant owner promised employment. But once the family arrived on Feb. 9, 1996, the relatives abrogated their responsibility, says DeGraaf.

Two days after the family arrived in Toronto, the relatives shipped the mother and her children off to Ottawa and left her on the steps of the Ministry of Citizens and Immigration. It being 4:20 p.m. on a Friday afternoon, the ministry did not know what to do except bring the family to an emergency shelter.

Eventually Ottawa contacted CRWRC and asked what was going on, says DeGraaf. He ended up going there to explain the situation.

The Somali community in Toronto wanted Ancaster CRC to file for a sponsorship breakdown, says DeGraaf, so that the woman could go on welfare. After the family was sent to Ottawa, the church would have reason to say that it could not meet the obligations of the sponsorship.

According to DeGraaf, the Somali community looks upon Ancaster CRC as "a choice vehicle for brokered sponsorships," and, after the relatives reneged, it did not want the church to get bogged down in

See **ANCASTER** *page 2...*

In this Issue

Jane Eyre: a good movie; a better book .... p. 7
The poetry of Joan Dower Kosmachuk p.10
Are strikers above the law? asks Harry Antonides .... p. 13

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News

Worm-eating broadcast on national radio

... continued from page 1

program. And Bootsma and Lise aren't the only Ontario Christian school principals to entertain their students with bizarre behavior to promote reading. Stan Baker of Immanuel Christian School in Oshawa and Rick Klooster of Chatham Christian School have both spent a day on the roofs of their respective schools.

Klooster is a four-year veteran of AR. Like Bootsma, he also knows what it's like to smooch a pig. And he has spent a day in a make-shift jail, he says. (This year he's off the hook; the kids get a day off; they'll come to school but get to play their way through the day.)

A new and different challenge

When Henry Lise came to Holland Marsh last September and learned of the situation there, he quickly challenged students to double their reading goal to 12,000 points.

The students issued a return challenge. If they met Lise's goal he would have a "choice" of swimming in the canal out back of the school, or drinking its dirty water; he could spend a day at his desk — on the roof; he could get an ear pierced; he could dye his hair green; or he could eat worms.

Lise chose the worms because sitting on the roof had already been done and "I didn't want to mutilate my body," he says.

We'll see that and raise you 2,000

With a work ethic worthy of true, if young, Calvinists, and no doubt spurred on by mental visions of their principal sucking up a couple of worms, the kids exceeded Lise's set goal. They tallied 14,000 points, or almost 4,722 books, and loved doing it. In fact, one Grade 7 student, Marcella Knibbe, racked up 800 points all by herself. She read 90 books on her own time during the school year.

How did Lise get to eat his worms on Gzowski's show?

Being a conscientious teacher, Hall faxed Gzowski a request for information on edible worms. "I didn't want to accidentally poison Henry!" she says amicably. She reasoned that Gzowski, who seems to have interviewed everybody under the sun and have vast and varied information resources, "would probably know of a worm expert I could contact."

A proposition

Hall wasn't expecting what came next. "Imagine my surprise when the producer of *Morningside* phoned back and said he had a proposition for me. He'd give me the information if he could interview me, and Henry would eat the worm on the show." Hall didn't hesitate. "I said, 'Sure!' — and then told Henry he was going to eat the worm on national radio!"

And he did — slowly, chewing each bite — to the accompaniment of delighted squeals from the kids. The worms, which Hall picked up at a local bait shop, "are chewy and taste like chicken," according to Lise. Gzowski expressed skepticism about that but was happy to declare Lise a good sport.

All the fun and silliness don't obscure the serious purpose of AR, and, in fact, "rewards" like seeing their principal eat is a great motivator. Another is setting up a "store" every couple of months where students can use their AR points to shop for T-shirts, pencils, bookmarks "and especially books — our most popular prize," says Hall.

She explains, "We are committed to improving not just reading skills, but also the quality of books being read by our students. Our reading program is dedicated to helping our students at all levels improve their vocabulary and reading comprehension, to learn positive values and expand their horizons and develop a lifelong love of reading."

AR is not used as the basis of Holland Marsh's reading program, Hall says, but to "motivate students to increase their independent, recreational reading, to develop God's gift of reading."

Ontario Christian schools develop their own 'accelerated reading' program

Marian Van Til

ANCASTER, Ont. — This summer, nine teachers at schools which are part of the Ontario Alliance of Christian Schools (OACS) will be involved in developing an OACS version of the accelerated reading (AR) program, says Lettie Hall, one of the nine, and the AR co-ordinator at Holland Marsh District Christian School. The program will appear both in print and on disk. The books used "will espouse Christian values but not necessarily be what you would call 'Christian fiction.'"

Jim Vreugdenhil, OACS elementary education co-ordinator, says OACS initially looked into tapping into the existing AR program being used by Holland Marsh and some other Christian schools. That program was developed by a Wisconsin company called Advantage Learning Systems. But when the company learned of OACS's specifically Christian intent, it had reservations.

So OACS decided to develop its own program, called "Digging Deeper," says Vreugdenhil. It will start with about 500 books and complement the Advantage AR program. The reading goal similar. It will find out whether the child has read a book, and whether he or she understands it.

Ancaster church pulls out of remaining sponsorships

... continued from page 1

looking after one family. But the Ancaster deacons did not want to let the family go on welfare.

So the family was returned to Ancaster. The deacons scrambled some furniture together and temporarily settled the family in a basement apartment of one of its senior members. Since the newcomers did not know how to operate Western conveniences, it wasn't long before a lot of things got wrecked, including taps, doors, beds and toilet. The owner was eventually accused of having hit one of the children and having locked a door to keep a child out. At one time the police were called in.

From the start the woman was unco-operative, says DeGraaf. "She had been advised by Somali friends that she would be better off going on welfare than being looked after by a church. That way she would get a townhouse and new furniture."

The upshot of the affair was that Ancaster turned responsibility for the family over to Citizens and Immigration, which, in effect means that the family will be on welfare and may be eligible for about $2,000 a month, including shelter allowance, says a report in the *Hamilton Spectator*.

Ancaster CRC deacons expressed regret, since this was the first sponsorship breakdown the church has had in 15 years, after assisting approximately 500 families. Since this episode the council of Ancaster CRC has decided to pull out of the remaining 224 brokered sponsorships it had earlier signed on behalf of refugees still in Africa.

Rick DeGraaf

Gerald VanderWillik, refugee co-ordinator for Ancaster CRC, is seeking to have other churches sponsor some of these.

Involved in refugee settlement since 1980, he says that he's "very disappointed that people can lie and be so deceiving." Yet he does not want churches to give up on sponsorships. "I know what it is like to be a refugee," he says. He's referring to his two years of hiding and a few months in a concentration camp during World War II.

Words of caution

The lesson to be learned, according to DeGraaf, is for a church not to take on more than three or four sponsorships at a time, even if these are brokered sponsorships (in fact, the government has been discouraging brokered sponsorships for some time). An agreement between a church and relatives of refugees has no legal standing, as the church is ultimately responsible for the first year of settlement.

DeGraaf does not want churches to give up on refugee sponsorships, but he does want churches to make sure that they sponsor true refugees whose lives are in danger. And he wants churches to have relatives of refugees explore other avenues of sponsorship, such as Family-Reunification and "Group of Five" sponsorships.

The fact that Christians sponsor Muslim refugees shows that our compassion goes beyond our own community, says DeGraaf. But he admits that when dealing with Muslims, one has to realize that, according to the Islamic faith, lying is not a great sin, especially not when a Muslim lies to Christians, whom they consider "infidels."

DeGraaf advises churches to "listen and seriously critique the refugee story: Is it urgent? Are lives in danger? Can the claims be verified? Have the refugees registered with a United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees office?"

No Issue on June 21, 1996

In keeping with our no-issue schedule (see box on p. 5), we will not publish an issue on June 21, 1996. Deadline for the next issue (June 28) is Wednesday, June 19, 1996.

Politics/News

Principalities & Powers

Political correctness

Most people are familiar with "political correctness," often abbreviated to PC, an expression coined by the popular media several years ago. It describes a decadent version of what was once known as common courtesy, but with an added tinge of stridency and — paradoxically — perhaps even rudeness. Its proponents see it as nothing more than a means of heightening our sensitivities to the legitimate needs and aspirations of various minority groups historically marginalized by the dominant culture.

Opponents, however, conjure up the dreaded spectre of "thought police" roaming university campuses hunting down some poor soul who might have inadvertently used "mankind" to refer to the human species as a whole. They appeal to our historic Western respect for freedom of speech and the reluctance of political authorities to tell citizens what to think and say.

Courtesy or curtailment?

It is no accident that PC efforts to regulate speech have come at a time when conventional social morés and rules of etiquette are in a state of flux. At one time all North American children knew they should address their elders as "Mister" and "Missus" rather than by their first names. Their parents taught them this and the schools reinforced it. Similarly, a young man was expected to give up his seat on a bus to a pregnant woman or elderly person.

Such courtesies had their dark side as well. In the American South, the same rules dictating that youngsters defer to their elders also once called for blacks to give up their seats to whites, or to sit in the back of a bus. It is not surprising that, with a greater emphasis on liberating oppressed minorities from past injustices, there would be a tendency to throw out the good with the bad — to dispense with good manners and replace them with a greater degree of individual freedom and self-assertion.

All this has come at a price. As Judith Martin (a.k.a. "Miss Manners") has observed, etiquette is not the rarefied invention of the upper classes but an indispensable means enabling ordinary people in any society to relate to each other without coming to blows. Currently, however, we see honesty as the supreme virtue and hypocrisy as the ultimate evil, even if it spares someone else's feelings. To refrain from informing a friend that her new dress is unflattering is now viewed as insincere and duplicitous.

Inevitable mess

Martin further argues that, where etiquette has broken down, there is a greater temptation to try to judicialize the minutiae of human behavior. Thus, in a society with no sense of shame, virtually any and all examples of disagreeable conduct become matters for the courts to adjudicate. Because whatever is still legal must be considered socially permissible, any attempt to restrict inconsiderate behavior requires a dangerous expansion of the law beyond its competence. Under such circumstances it is hardly surprising that some people should attempt to reconstruct a system of etiquette that would restore some semblance of order in social relationships. This is where PC comes in.

Perhaps PC is best seen as an understandable but misguided attempt to impose a certain measure of discipline on a society in which common courtesy and mutual respect have degenerated into a Hobbesian war of all against all. If so, then we Christians should not content ourselves simply to reject PC. We ought rather to demonstrate in our lives what it means to treat our fellow human beings as God's image-bearers.

David T. Koyzis teaches political science at Redeemer College, Ancaster, Ont. As a Franco-Greek-Cypriot-Finno-Anglo-American-Canadian, he is a member of one of the most marginalized minorities in the country.

Christian groups pool their resources to cut costs

COURTESY WORLD TEAM CANADA

The Mississauga office building owned by ACTS

Alan Doerksen

MISSISSAUGA, Ont. — In an effort to cut costs and pool their resources, eight Christian organizations got together recently to purchase an office building in Mississauga, Ont. They also formed a corporation called the Association of Christians Together in Service (ACTS), which owns and runs the building.

"We are, in fact, renting from ourselves," says John Murray, executive director of Eurovangelism, one of the shareholders of ACTS. "It's a win-win situation."

The other original members of ACTS are World Team Canada (formerly Worldteam), Regions Beyond Missionary Union (RBMU), the Jewels for Jesus adoption agency, the Slavic Gospel Association, Open Doors, the World Radio Missionary Fellowship, and Shantymen International.

Couldn't do it alone

Eurovangelism, which was started in Britain 30 years ago, has been operating in Canada for 12 years. Its mission is to envision, encourage and equip Christians and churches in Eastern Europe. At present, Murray and a part-time secretary are its only employees in Canada.

"There's no way we as a mission could purchase a building," says Murray. Neither could the other organizations unless they co-operated.

In 1992, the eight ministries started discussing the possibility of joining together to buy a building. In July 1994 they formed ACTS and appointed a board of seven directors who are not connected with any of the ministries. Then a $200,000 mortgage was arranged and a building purchased for $1 million. At that time, five of the founding organizations moved into the building, followed in December 1994 by Eurovangelism and in Deceber 1995 by Open Doors and the Slavic Gospel Association. Other Christian groups have become tenants of the building but are not members of ACTS.

According to Joan Kosmachuk, executive director of Jewels for Jesus, "ACTS' purpose is to own and administer an office building in which shareholders are tenants.... It is an attempt by eight ministries to secure their futures and lower their costs over the long term so that a greater percentage of annual revenues can be used in carrying out their ministries."

One advantage of the partnership is that members can share resources. "We double up on things like photocopiers and fax machines," says Murray. "It helps on administration."

"Two of the members have merged together," Murray notes. These are RBMU and Worldteam which have now become World Team Canada. Ken Bennett, director of World Team Canada, says the two groups were already considering a merger before they moved to the new building. World Team's work involves church-planting "with a focus on unreached people groups," he says.

One benefit of co-owning the building is "once the building has been capitalized and the property paid for you have a reduction in the rent," says Bennett. He also appreciates "working together with like-minded organizations." Besides sharing equipment, World Team also gets some secretarial help from another organization in the building, he adds.

Just the beginning

Bennett expects there may be more co-operation among the tenants in the future. "It's at the beginning stages." For example, the organizations may co-operate on training programs.

Because ACTS has "an arms-length board," this helps to avoid conflicts of interest among member organizations, says Bennett.

Right now, the building is 85 per cent occupied, and ACTS is looking for more Christian organizations to become tenants, says Bennett.

Kosmachuk mentions that key advantages of the ACTS partnership are: lower operational costs, information sharing, and a good location with easy accessibility to Toronto's Pearson International Airport.

Editorials

Father's Day reflections by a puzzled father

Sometimes I think Father's Day is just a sop thrown in as an afterthought to Mother's Day. After all, Mother's Day was already celebrated in the 1800s, and received national recognition before Father's Day did. Mother's Day takes place the second Sunday in May; Father's Day follows on the third Sunday in June. Get it? Second; third. Now think of Easter as falling on the *first* Sunday after the *first* full moon following the *first* day of spring, and the pattern becomes clear. First comes God, then comes mother, then comes dad hanging on like a rudder.

Which is probably the way it should be. After all, when it comes to parenting, mothers do the lion(ess)'s share. So fathers should gratefully take their places on the third row — if they're good fathers, that is.

What makes for a good father? The answer, I'm afraid, is blowing in the wind. We used to know what made for a good father. A "good" father was someone who provided for the family by working hard, usually outside the home, and having half an hour free after supper to interact with the children. A good father was the final arbiter or policeman in matters of discipline. A good father led in devotions. A good father never contradicted his wife in front of the children. A good father smoked a cigar or a pipe. If a good mother represented the intimacy of an immanent God, a good father represented the authority of a transcendent God.

This is no longer the ideal father of the '90s, however. The new father assumes co-responsibility for the nurture of his and his wife's children. If he works outside the home, he is expected to pitch in after work. A good father today is expected to be as vulnerable as mothers often are. No specific authority role has been set aside for him. And forget about cigars and pipes!

For some of us this change of paradigm has led to a bit of an identity crisis. If fathers cannot be what they have been, what then should they do or be?

Does God model fatherhood?

One might ask whether or not fathers can get a clue about their identity from God the Father. But that route, we think, is fraught with dangers. First of all, all human beings are made in the image of God, both male and female, young and old, married and unmarried. So there is no special image concept for fathers to be derived from God. Secondly, God is not in the business of modeling roles. He is who he is, the eternal and inscrutable God. Being known as the Father is a metaphorical way of helping us understand that he is loving, kind and in full control of things. We may trust him fully.

I suspect that God's revelation of himself as Father has important implications for how human beings are to live their lives and experience their faith. But does it tell men how to be fathers? No more than it tells women how to be mothers.

Being a father has more to do with acting out maleness in parenting, according to the ways that we experience that in our own nature, from our fathers and through education. It also has very much to do with how we work things out with our spouses. As such there is very little we can say about the ideal father since there are as many ways of being a good father as there are fingerprints.

The things that count

Although being a good provider may rank high in the historical annals of fatherhood, it is not the thing for which children will lovingly remember their fathers. Fatherhood is first of all a relationship which a man develops between himself and his children. This relationship will be judged according to the way it helps children become self-assured, faithful and loving adults.

If the father is communicative, open, humble, consistent, flexible, playful, serious, committed, supportive, generous, unselfish, steady, imaginative, passionate, gentle, positive and discerning, chances are his children will praise him and thank him. Chances are that mothers need the same qualities. Chances are also that most fathers, including this one, do not pass the grade.

In that case, there is only one way we fathers can be salvaged in the memories of our children: through love! Love makes up for a lot of shortcomings, both our own sacrificial love and the love of our forgiving children.

I'm always a bit uncomfortable on Father's Day. What did I do to deserve this special attention? I ask myself. My wife deserves every bit of loving attention she gets on Mother's Day, and more. Of course, she will deny that with equal vehemence. But she has no reason to. I do, because I grew up thinking that much of fatherhood was a state of being rather than an act of service. And I'm still amazed that our children accepted that as sufficient ... under the circumstances! **BW**

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The Judah lion's share

I used the expression "lion's share" in my editorial. According to *Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase and Fable*, the expression comes from one of *Aesop's Fables*, in which several animals join the lion in a hunt. When the spoils are divided, the lion claims one quarter because that is his prerogative, one quarter because of his superior courage, one quarter for his dam and cubs, and "as for the fourth quarter, let he who will, dispute it with me." Awed by his frown, the other animals yield and silently withdraw.

So a lion's share means "all or nearly all." In the fable it suggests selfishness, for which the male lion is known. I witnessed that in a game park in South Africa some years ago when the party I was in followed a pair of lions in an open jeep. The female was the best hunter, but the male took the "lion's share" of the spoils. But since animals are amoral beings, one can hardly call the male lion selfish (associate editor Van Til disputes this notion). Fables personify animals to teach human beings about themselves.

In my editorial, the expression denotes unselfishness when mothers *do* the lion's share of nurturing. And when it comes to our redemption from death to life, Jesus has done the lion's share of taking on God's anger and defeating the devil, who prowls around like Aesop's lion, looking for someone to devour. Jesus, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, was supremely unselfish as he laid down his life for sinners — fathers, mothers and children. **BW**

Letters

Obscene centralization of wealth is the problem

Surprisingly, Hielema and Bick got this one all wrong. Clearly, in their respective articles —"A thief? Me?" and "The CPP debate doesn't have to be generational warfare" — they've both succumbed to the propaganda that there's a problem with the Canada Pension Plan that's beyond redemption, except to cut and cut some more. The same moralists have even convinced poor old Hielema he's a thief, stealing the future away from his children and grandchildren.

On the other hand, the numerical gyrations of actuaries so impress Bick, he's nearly convinced his parents are at war with his children. His solution is to reduce social policy to "look out for yourself, with the help of your friendly financial planner!"

Gentlemen, the problem is not in the CPP! The problem is the obscene accumulation and undemocratic centralization of wealth and economic power, along with many related activities that have no redeeming social value. If social policy in Canada isn't working as it should, it's only because it's not distributing the nation's immense wealth fairly and democratically. The vaunted free market, the "invisible hand," doesn't know how to distribute income and wealth equitably since its principal ethic is greed.

A recent and good example of the undemocratic "invisible hand" took place in "the promised land" next door. There, the daily Dow Jones average stock price increased dramatically as it celebrated a rise in the number of unemployed citizens; unemployment is a good thing for those who watch and worship the market! For all of us: please remember that the next time we have that 50 per cent tax-free lunch with our friendly accountant to discuss the value of a mutual fund-based pension plan. Its value has increased because our neighbor has lost her job! But what the heck, we can now afford a small donation to our friendly food bank. Our neighbor can go there to get leftover and rejected food for his children. After all, the donation is now 50 per cent tax deductible too!

Do you think that full-employment policies and corporate and personal tax reform might help us reconfirm the covenant ethic between the generations?

Jake Kuiken
Calgary

No evidence for paradigm shift

The letter by John Stronks headlined, "Christians should not argue for a common morality" (May 17), is both confusing and inaccurate. The writer wrongly summarizes and very selectively quotes from my article, "All perspectives must be respected," which appeared in the *London Free Press* of Aug. 19, 1995.

I did not argue then, and I do not argue today, as Mr. Stronks claims that "the government's role is to define and enact legislation according to a 'common morality.'" There is a *real* difference between "common morality" and public justice for all.

It pains me as a Christian of Reformed persuasion that Mr. Stronks so easily brands my Christian public-justice views as "a fundamental paradigm shift away from what we have historically understood our roles as Reformed Christians in a secular society to be." Where's the evidence?

If you wish to participate in a fruitful dialogue about how we can best advocate human rights based on public justice for all in education, and when it comes to employment matters and the provision of goods and services regulated by federal laws and policies, you will want to read CPJ's 10-page submission entitled "Public Justice and Human Rights — a Call for legal Equality for Gays and Lesbians" and other CPJ publications. Copies are available from CPJ by calling tel.: (416) 979-2443 or fax: (416) 979-2458.

We welcome constructive comments and specific suggestions as to how we, *together*, can improve on our Christian political witness.

Gerald Vandezande
National Public Affairs Director
Citizens for Public Justice
Agincourt, Ont.

Where was Rufus' repentance?

I read with interest "Rufus remembers Pentecost" by Brian J. Walsh (CC, May 24). A presentation like this may well help some readers to relive, as it were, those crucial Pentecost days.

To have the proper result, however, the events presented in Acts 2 must be followed faithfully. I think all will agree that the most essential happening that day was the effect in the hearts of the hearers. It is to this point in the narrative that I would like to draw your readers attention.

I would suggest that readers compare Acts 2:37 with three paragraphs in Walsh's story, starting at "It was almost as if the curse of Babel was being lifted..." and ending with "...to dream dreams of the restoration of this world into the Kingdom of God." In Acts 2 a deep conviction and remorse led the people to confession and baptism. In Walsh's narrative, however, it is a longing for the benefits that Rufus expects to come to him from following the Lord Jesus.

I think it will be beneficial for each reader to weigh this distinction. Does not Walsh's narrative show the view of conversion so predominant today? Not a conviction of sin, but a desire for benefits are so often presented at today's gospel outreach efforts. Does this not lead to "conversions" like those which were sown on the rocks in Matthew 13? The soil of the hardened heart has not been plowed up. Conversion of a sort is there, but the essential *repentance* is missing.

At first there is a happy acceptance, but then there is no ability to continue, for the root is lacking.

John van Dijk
Ajax, Ont.

Stories helped to break down barriers

If Mephibosheth were still alive, he would have been thrilled with the May 24 issue of your weekly publication. Not only did you report extensively on what happened at The King's Table in Waterloo, Ont., but the article on Jean Vanier's love for people with disabilities and your report on what is being done in Ontario by and for families of people with mental illnesses were also very much appreciated.

One of the things we sought to bring about at our Eastern Canada Disability Conference was to build a stronger, healthier relationship between our brothers and sisters with disabilities and the church. Joni Eareckson Tada really helped us to break down some barriers and to celebrate God's desire to involve *all his children* in the ministry of his church.

One part of the story you printed in that same May 24 issue should have been left out. The description of a mentally retarded camper's tongue showed the author's unawareness of the feelings of parents who have a child with Down's syndrome. We found it insensitive. Let us be careful not to add to the pain of parents who must constantly struggle to help others see their special child's beauty rather than his or her physical or mental deformity.

We look forward to every issue of CC. We just renewed our subscription for the next two years. God bless you as you seek to keep us in touch with each other and the world in which we together are called to seek the Kingdom of heaven.

Peter and Ann DeBruyne
Grimsby, Ont.

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Comment

Follow the breath of the Almighty in you!

Bert Witvoet

I have two letters on my desk that arrived on the same day. That's not unusual, except that the two letters were written by two retired pastors. What's more intriguing is that both letter writers are annoyed with me, but for entirely opposite reasons.

The one pastor chastises me for taking a stand on things. This, according to him, alienates people. "Take a neutral position, Mr. Witvoet," he writes, "and your paper as well." My answer to him in a previous letter, wherein I explained that I have "to walk with all integrity before the face of the Lord, with whatever insight the Lord has given me" he dismisses as the cause of all bickering and fighting in the Christian Reformed Church.

The other pastor takes me to task for playing it too safe. "You are killing your readership, Bert. Too afraid to be controversial, your paper says nothing anymore. I am seriously considering cancelling my subscription."

It's not very pleasant to get letters like these, of course, but this time I thanked the Lord for sending me two contradictory letters on the same day. It was as if the one had cancelled out the other. I certainly did not have to accept blame for both perceived faults. You can't be too controversial and not controversial enough at the same time.

The expressed opinions of the two retired pastors remind me of a conversation I had with another senior pastor some 30 years ago.

Age before youth

This pastor wanted me to follow his thinking, and pleaded with me to accept his judgment because, he said, he was older than I. I suppose he was thinking that wisdom comes with age, and that I, being the younger man, should follow Elihu's example and say, "I am young in years, and you are old; that is why I was fearful, not daring to tell you what I know. I thought, 'Age should speak; advanced years should teach wisdom'" (Job 32: 6,7).

The problem I had, however, was that another pastor, roughly the same age as the pastor I was talking to, was in agreement with me. And so I told this first pastor, "Your appeal does not work for me. Your equally old colleague disagrees with you. I still have to make up my own mind."

Today the situation is slightly different. I no longer have to feel that I am young and inexperienced. At age 60 plus I can relieve myself of the burden of having to yield to older and presumably wiser people. At the same time, I would hope that I would never make an appeal to my age when talking with a younger person. Age does not necessarily bring greater wisdom. Wisdom is an independent spirit that makes herself available to whomever listens to her. The only advantage older people have is that they have had the opportunity to listen to her longer. And so, I would still like to learn from older people.

CC FILES

"It is not only the old who are wise"

But what does one do when two older pastors give conflicting advice?

Life experience will tell us that no matter what position we take, we can always find people who will agree or disagree with us. Seeking advice is a tricky thing in the best of circumstances. Why do we seek advice from certain people and not from others? Is it because we want their advice to be of a certain kind? Or is it because we learn to trust some people more than others? Ultimately, we always have to fall back on our own resources.

Follow your own spirit

Actually, Elihu follows his previously quoted statement with somewhat of an answer to my dilemma. "But it is the spirit in a man, the breath of the Almighty, that gives him understanding," he said to Job and his friends. "It is not only the old who are wise, nor only the aged who understand what is right" (Job 32:8,9).

Elihu is right: You and I must rely on the breath of the Almighty in us. We may ask advice from others. But ultimately, it is our spirits that must give us understanding. That's why I had written to the one pastor that I have no choice but to walk before the face of the Lord with whatever insight the Lord has given me.

We will not be so bold as to claim that our inner light automatically equals wisdom. And so our advice to readers is to test what we write against the voice of wisdom they have been hearing. After all, "wisdom is proved right by all her children" (Luke 7:35).

Letters

Weird should not be equated with iniquity

I've enjoyed Rob Janssens' columns on sports. However, his treatment of basketball player Dennis Rodman in "Celebrity status leaves some in the dark ages" left me a bit perplexed.

I'm curious about Janssens' perspective regarding eccentricity. His praise of things "simple" and "ordinary-looking" marginalizes many of society's groups. Does Janssens believe eccentricity is antithetical to creation, or that a person's appearance has something to do with his validity, worth or humanity? Does Janssens believe "normalcy" exists? If he answers the affirmative to any of the questions, I suggest he read Bahktin or Faucault or, better yet, the latest book by Brian Walsh of the Institute for Christian Studies.

Janssens' argumentation is at times undeveloped. In his aversion to Rodman, he writes: "What is with the multi-colored hair, the outrageous tattoos, the head-butting of officials, the ripping off of clothing...?" Why does Janssens bunch these features together, as if they are mistakes of equal measure? Only one of these features is illegal: hitting a referee. The others are only personal peculiarities. However, by the way he has set up this phrase, Janssens suggests that coloring hair is comparable to assaulting a human being, a less than well-formed argument.

Behind the appearance

Finally, Janssens could have done a better job researching the careers of Rodman and Orel Herscheiser before suggesting that Rodman is a "buffoon" and Herscheiser an ace athlete. Herscheiser demanded a massive salary increase after winning the World Series's MVP award. And when his ERA skyrocketed the following year, he became a moody whiner who irritated his teammates. Yet people don't know this. They don't know this because Herscheiser fulfils an American dream: he is an apple pie-eating, freckle-faced, Richie Cunningham lookalike, a precious piece of white. As such, he will always be privileged."

Dennis Rodman, it's true, can be a jerk. However, there are also complex, intriguing reasons behind his "weirdness." Rodman learned to hate conventional living. He struggled under the rigid management of the Detroit Pistons, growing sick of being expected to behave like "a good black boy." For his personal decision to reject conventional life, we spit on him. But in doing so, we forget that Rodman's freakishness is his personal choice and says nothing about his humanity.

Few people, including commentators, acknowledge that Rodman always helps other players up from the floor, laughs at his mistakes, acknowledges his fouls, and stops playing to help out an injured player. And contrary to how Janssens described this particular, Rodman tears off his jersey at a game's conclusion to give it to a fan, usually a child.

It's true, Rodman will never guest speak at Young Calvinist conventions, nor should he. I am leery only of the associations Janssens makes between eccentricity and iniquity, the way he compares Rodman to Albert Belle, and the values he perpetuates by using terms such as "simple" and "ordinary."

P.S.: Along with lots of other people, I hope CC stays alive."

Dirk B. Schouten
Grimsby, Ont.

Correction

Our May 24 Thinkbit, "What you believe is religion; in whom you believe is Christianity," was not anonymous; or, at least, it is no longer anonymous, because Suzanne Dube from Kingston, Ont., told us that it came from the fecund mind of her husband, Ron Dube. It only goes to prove that sometimes what you believe is not even religion, least of all, gospel truth. Our apologies to Ron and our thanks to Suzanne.

Editor

ARTS & MEDIA

Jane Eyre

This *Jane Eyre* elicits little passion

Marian Van Til

Rated G.
Stars Charlotte Gainsbourg, William Hurt, Joan Plowright, Anna Paquin. Directed by Franco Zefferelli. Based on the novel by Charlotte Bronte.

The current proliferation of film versions of classic novels probably signals a longing by a society adrift for a time when right and wrong were clearly defined, responsibilities were accepted, duty performed, and grace and good manners were evident in people's behavior (at least if they were in the educated classes).

While Jane Austen wittily satirized the foibles of the English middle class in the late 18th-early 19th centuries, Charlotte Bronte, almost four decades later, was a writer of a different stripe. *Jane Eyre*, written in 1847, is still about duty, honor and love, but it is tinged with Romanticism, expressing a greater emotional freedom and more openly passionate relationships.

The three Bronte sisters and their brother lived most of their lives in a parsonage in Ireland with their eccentric, widowed father. Charlotte's *Jane Eyre* is partly autobiographical, based on her own boarding school experience, her intimate knowledge of her brother's madness, and her unrequited love for an enigmatic and brooding married man.

Despite Charlotte's rather sheltered existence, she was a keen observer of human nature and behavior, and had astute descriptive powers. Those two qualities no doubt account for the ongoing popularity of her novel.

Forged by suffering

Jane Eyre is orphaned as a young girl. After a painful time spent with an aunt and cousins who berate her and try to crush her independent spirit, she spends more painful years at a mostly loveless, ostensibly Christian boarding school.

As a young woman she takes a position as a governess to the ward of the master of a huge estate. The master, Rochester, is a lonely and moody man — as a result, we later learn, of his having been buffeted about by nasty relatives and circumstances.

When Rochester and Jane fall in love it creates an impossible situation. Rochester is Jane's social superior (a thing not to be taken lightly in the early 19th century). Nor is she a beautiful woman. But she is more than a match for him intellectually and emotionally. Initially, there is also another formidable obstacle to their marrying (which won't be divulged here).

The film is flawless in its accurate depiction of the setting and the historical period. The acting, too, is satisfying. Charlotte Gainsbourg as Jane and Joan Plowright as the housekeeper stand out. And American William Hurt as Rochester is surprisingly good. But the movie isn't much more than a pleasant diversion; it leaves one strangely unmoved.

Not having read the novel (I confess! — but it's now on my list), I began to wonder about whether the film's lack of impact was its own deficiency or the book's. Since the book still endures as a classic, I suspected the movie.

I was right. To find that out I consulted a friend of mine who is a Bronte afficianado. She has studied biographies of the Brontes, owns six or seven editions of *Jane Eyre* and read the book again recently for probably the eighth time since she was 13.

Charlotte Gainsbourg (left) and William Hurt at the altar — almost

Unlike this film, my friend says the book "doesn't leave you indifferent. You either think it's a great read, or you don't."

There are several key elements in Bronte's novel that have vanished from or are diminished in the film. The clergyman St. John Rivers is a very minor character in the film. In the novel he plays a major role as a foil to Rochester. Both in looks and character, he is the unblemished, blond Apollo to Rochester's dark vulcan. Rivers is a gracious, hospitable man of even temperament; he is to be a missionary to India and wants Jane to marry him and accompany him in that work, for which he feels she is well qualified.

Dilemma disappears

Rochester has a certain integrity, but he has lived most of his life as a rake, is supporting a child who may or not be his daughter as the result of an affair, and is emotionally volatile.

He initially asks Jane to come away with him rather than marry him. She refuses on moral grounds.

Jane's dilemma is choosing between these two men; one who will give her the opportunity to be married and safe; the other who will provide excitement, and challenge her intellectually and emotionally. This quandary is simply not present in the film. Though Rivers is there and asks Jane to marry him, we know she will refuse because he is so peripheral to the film.

Thus the story's major dramatic struggle is gone. Neither is there reference to Christian motivation or character on the part of Jane. Unfairly, the picture we see of Christians is the abusive hypocrites who raise Jane; Rivers the clergyman barely counts.

Fuzzy romanticism

Director Franco Zefferelli seems to want to elicit the story's romanticism by filming almost everything in muted light, but it feels and looks contrived with much of the story's true romantic passion missing.

The film also makes Bronte's ending too pat. Jane inherits an uncle's fortune (making her Rochester's social equal), she and Rochester marry, he fully recovers his sight lost in a fire, and they raise a happy family. At least Bronte, while insisting on a happy ending, had the sense to temper it with a little reality by allowing Rochester to lose a hand and only partially recover his sight.

Since 1934 there have been at least four other film adaptations of *Jane Eyre*. The most powerful, my friend tells me, is a four-hour British production from the mid-1980s (available on video) starring Timothy Dalton as Rochester.

Canadian singer and opera orchestra shine in new recording

OTTAWA (Canadian Scene) — When British musician Richard Bradshaw joined the Canadian Opera Company (COC) as chief conductor in 1989, he proceeded to transform its orchestra into a first-class musical unit. Now artistic director of COC he is leader of a group recognized by music critics as one of the finest operatic orchestras in the world. Bradshaw's expressive style of conducting matches his exuberant personality, which has done much to convince the public that opera is alive and well — and an art form that's for all people — not just for an elite few.

Among the front ranks

Among the orchestra's enthusiasts is Canadian singer Richard Margison, who in recent years has sung on opera stages through the world and along with Ben Heppner, another Canadian, is now classed in the front ranks of operatic tenors. Margison is fully committed with operatic engagements for the next four years. He declares himself delighted with the orchestra's performance in two projects he undertook recently.

This spring CBC Records issued Margison's second compact disc recorded with Bradshaw and the COC orchestra. The first, released last fall featured Margison and other singers in rare arias by Verdi and Rossini.

Much variety

The new recording, entitled *French and Italian Arias*, is a worthy successor to the first Margison-Bradshaw collaboration. Of the 19 selections, Margison sings 15 arias such as Meyerbeer's *O Paradis*, Bizet's *La Fleur Que Tu M'avais Jetée*, Ponchielli's *Cielo e Mar* and Puccini's *Nessun Dorma*. The other four selections feature Bradshaw and the orchestra in purely instrumental interludes, two of which are not frequently heard in concert halls: the intermezzi from Mascagni's *Guglielmo Ratcliff* and Puccini's *Manon Lescaut*.

French and Italian Arias is an outstanding recording. Its release is accompanied by two more CBC albums, digitally remastered from recordings of the 1970s, whose artistic quality matches their historic value. They feature the great Canadian mezzo-soprano, Lois Marshall, at the peak of her career in Schubert's *Winterreise (The Winter Journey)* and *Die Schone Mullerin (The Beautiful Maid of the Mill)*. She is accompanied by pianists Anton Kuerti in the first and Greta Kraus in the second.

CRC ordains first woman pastor

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (REC) — Leslie van Milligen became the first woman ordained as clergy in the Christian Reformed Church in North America. In March Classis Lake Erie ordained her as an evangelist, and she will serve at the North Hills CRC in Troy, Mich.

As an evangelist, van Milligen will be able to perform all aspects of pastoral ministry except to function as a senior pastor of a church. Only a technicality in her course work prevented her from being ordained as a minister. She and her husband, who is an ordained minister, will hold a position together at the Troy church. They will assist the senior pastor at Troy, George Vander Weit.

Vander Weit has been very active in promoting women's ministries. He has written overtures and been an active advocate at CRC synod meetings. He also was the author of a church-order change that allowed evangelists to serve in organized churches as well as unorganized. He said Troy did not consciously go out to seek a woman pastor for its position, but the van Milligens were the right persons.

In 1995 the CRC synod voted to allow classes (its regional bodies), to ordain women elders and ministers, without requiring a church order change. So far, 13 of the church's 46 classes have taken this option. Many of the churches in those 13 classes have ordained women as elders, but the procedure to certify women as candidates for the ministry has taken longer.

In another case, an unordained woman pastor who has been a pastor since 1994, will not be ordained at her church. The classis in northern Michigan refused to allow the church order exception, so Mary Lee Bouma will not yet receive ordination for her position. She has worked under a 1992 synod provision that allows women to expound, and thus do all the tasks of an ordained pastor except administer the sacraments.

American pro-life leaders issue joint declaration

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (REC) — Forty-four evangelical and Catholic leaders have signed a document calling Americans to recognize the link between their loss of virtue and the abortion license. "The America We Seek: A Statement of Pro-Life Principle and Concern" appeared in the May issue of *First Things*, a scholarly journal of Christian social commentary.

The document tries to appeal across the gap between pro- and anti-abortion forces in the United States. Because of two U.S. Supreme Court decisions, abortion is legal any time in pregnancy, the document states. There is a virtual license for a private decision about who will live and who will die.

This sweeping abortion license was "defined unilaterally by the Supreme Court without recourse to the normal procedures of democratic debate," the statement asserts. The court decisions to justify abortion were based on autonomy of the person and have infected other areas of law. By elevating abortion to an individual "right," there has been a distortion of other areas, such as free speech, national health care, and even foreign policy.

The authors state a simple goal: "We seek an America in which every unborn child is protected in law and welcomed in life. Legal and cultural renewal must both take place if America is to experience a new birth of the freedom that is ordered to goodness." They outline a few simple steps that at least would call attention to the link of abortion rights with other areas of social decline. They call on all Americans to provide "compassionate, caring service to women in crisis."

Church reaches hospitality limit

AKRON, Ohio (EP) — The First Congregational Church in Akron, Ohio, has reached the limits of its hospitality. The congregation voted 124-100 to ask a man who lives in a tent on the church lawn to move. Jim Dunn, 53, believes that God has commanded him to live on the lawn, and he has done so with his 9-year-old collie since April of 1995. Dunn has no job and doesn't shower. He sleeps in a filthy sleeping bag, but rejected a newer one given to him because he believes it is not God's will for him to have it. He refuses to go to a shelter two blocks away. Though many church members initially welcomed Dunn, the recent arrival of rats made them reconsider the arrangement. Church leaders set no eviction date for Dunn and offered to help him find a new home.

Olympic travellers to get physical, spiritual refreshment

COLUMBIA, S.C. (EP) — South Carolina's Baptist Convention will establish hospitality tents along the state's highways to provide refreshment to travellers who are on their way to the Olympic Games in Atlanta. The church group will set up stands in Aiken, Anderson, Dillon, Kershaw, Newberry, Orangeburg, Spartanburg and York counties. Church leaders expect to distribute about 300,000 gift bags containing snacks, coloring materials, towelettes and a special booklet containing Olympic information and Bible verses. Southern Baptists in Georgia have similar plans.

Bishop excommunicates hundreds

LINCOLN, Neb. (EP) — As of May 15, hundreds of Roman Catholics in the Lincoln Diocese are excommunicated. Bishop Fabian Bruskewitz ordered Catholics in his jurisdiction to resign their membership in 12 controversial organizations or be kicked out of the church. The groups included pro-abortion organizations such as Planned Parenthood and other groups whose views are at odds with Catholic doctrine. Bruskewitz, who is the first U.S. bishop in modern times to threaten excommunication, said his order succeeded in "unmasking some people who previously had a very questionable relationship with the Catholic Church."

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Principalities and powers

"For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him" (Col.1:16, NIV).

This verse is a powerful statement of the role of Jesus Christ in the creation of the world. Not only does he save the world, but he was the agent through whom the whole cosmos came into existence. In redemption he reclaims that which owed its existence to him in the first place. But in this column I would like to focus on the long list of "invisible" things which Paul here inserts as an illustration of the breadth of Christ's creational agency. What are these "thrones" and "powers" and "rulers" and "authorities" which are here all mentioned in one breath?

In contemporary discussion they are sometimes collectively referred to as the "powers" or the "principalities and powers." That's because the King James Version translated the last two terms as "principalities and powers."

Reality or mythology?

Are these real entities that should be taken seriously today? Conservative Christian believers have always said they are. They are real spiritual beings, either good angels who serve the interests of believers, or fallen angels (demons or unclean spirits), which are in the service of Satan. It is against the latter that Christians must engage in spiritual warfare according to Ephesians 6. More liberal Christians have tended to discount the New Testament references to the powers as outmoded mythology.

In recent years, however, even liberal (or at least non-conservative) Christians have begun to take a fresh look at the principalities and powers in the New Testament. It is quite popular nowadays to link these powers with societal institutions like the state, or with secular ideologies like Marxism.

Since ideologies like Marxism have inflicted untold suffering on millions of people in the name of a speculative human theory which aggressively denies the existence of God and the value of religion, there really is something demonic about them. Perhaps the passion and ruthlessness with which Marxism has been promoted owes something to the influence of demons. The same can be said of other ideologies like Nazism and laissez-faire liberalism, not to mention the various kinds of nationalism.

The state demonic?

But I believe it is a grave mistake to link the institution of the state as such to the New Testament teaching about the powers. It is often pointed out that in Romans 13:1, where Paul talks about the governing authorities, the same Greek word (*exousia*) is used as in Colossians 1:16 and other Pauline "powers" passages.

But that hardly justifies the conclusion that the state is somehow demonic in nature. In fact, the word *exousia* is the normal Greek word for political authority, and it is plain from the context in Romans 13 (as well as New Testament passages such as 1 Peter 2:13ff) that the political order is something which was ordained by God as part of the created order. This does not mean that civil authority is always exercised justly (in fact it is always tainted by sin, sometimes in a truly demonic way), but it teaches us that the state, as such, is a good gift of God. In cases of tyranny and other forms of bad government, the fault lies not with the institution of government, but with the sinful people who hold office in it.

Al Wolters teaches Bible and Greek at Redeemer College, Ancaster, Ont. He recently wrote a paper on the "powers" for a colloquium with the well-known British theologian Lesslie Newbigin to be held in England this month.

Jews for Jesus selects new leader

SAN FRANCISCO, Calif. (EP) — A fifth-generation Jewish believer in Jesus has been named executive director of Jews for Jesus. David Brickner, 37, will succeed founder Moishe Rosen, who recently announced that he is quitting the ministry's top job.

Brickner currently heads the Jews for Jesus New York branch. In that role, he will lead this year's intensive summer witnessing campaign in New York. He has been on the ministry's staff since 1981, and began volunteering with Jews for Jesus in 1976. A timetable for his transition to his new post has not been set.

"I believe David Brickner is God's choice," said Rosen, who chose not to participate in the selection process. "He has proven himself faithful to the gospel. He is a creative, incisive thinker and a keen strategist."

Rosen, 64, has led Jews for Jesus since founding the Christian evangelistic outreach to Jews in 1973. He will remain on the ministry's staff and will write, travel, speak and advise as needed.

On the cutting edge

Brickner said his goal is to keep Jews for Jesus on the "cutting edge of evangelism to the Jews first." He plans to explore new ways to communicate the gospel, including multimedia, video and the Internet. "The best songs have yet to be written, the best books have yet to be printed and the best outreach has yet to be developed," Brickner said. "We can only do this with God's help."

Brickner was raised in a Jewish-Christian home and has been exposed to messianic believers from around the world. "I thought all Jews believed in Jesus until I went to elementary school," he recalls. "Then I quickly found out it was otherwise!"

Brickner is a graduate of Moody Bible Institute in Chicago, which he attended on a Jews for Jesus scholarship. He also holds degrees from Northeastern Illinois University and Fuller Theological Seminary, and is ordained with the Baptist General Conference. He is a former leader of the Liberated Wailing Wall musical team and a featured writer in *Mishpochah Message*, a periodical for Jewish Christians. He and his wife, Pati, have two children, Isaac, 7, and Ilana, 4.

"David Brickner brings a new energy and yet has a lifetime of experience with the movement," said Rosen. "I feel his administration and leadership of Jews for Jesus will bring about a great leap forward."

CRC helps relieve food shortage in North Korea

BURLINGTON, Ont. (CRWRC) — The Christian Reformed World Relief Committee, the relief and development ministry of the Christian Reformed Church in North America, is participating in a Canadian Foodgrains Bank response to North Korea.

The food shipment, partially funded by CRWRC, will help 100,000 North Koreans who will receive rice rations for 30 days from a 1,000 metric tonne rice shipment. The rice has been purchased in Asia and should arrive in North Korea this week.

The food will assist families working on collective farms in Kangwon Province, North Korea. Made homeless by the 1995 floods, they are still housed with other farm families.

CRWRC is partnering with other members of the Canadian Foodgrains Bank, the World Food Program, CARITAS (the official social service agency of the Roman Catholic Church in Hong Kong), and the Korean Christian Federation in North Korea. The shipment, valued at nearly $400,000, is directed to the People's Democratic Republic of North Korea flood committee.

Missionaries among plane crash victims

MIAMI, Fla. (EP) — Members of a church planning missionary work in Venezuela were among the 104 passengers and five crew members killed when ValuJet Flight 592 crashed in the Florida Everglades May 11. Carlos Gonzalez, 24, came to the United States from Venezuela two years ago to further his education. He helped establish a Hispanic ministry at Mount Pisgah United Methodist Church in Alpharetta, Georgia, north of Atlanta.

Gonzalez was part of a church group that travelled to Venezuela to lay the ground work for a missionary venture the following year. Others in the group included his niece, Lila Viloleta; Ray Lathem, 20, son of the church's pastor; and Roger and Dana Lane, who had been married less than a year and were considering moving to Latin America to work as English teachers.

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Feature

The poetry of Joan Dower Kosmachuk

Dressed for a January Evening

Murky ponds
sport topcoats
of satin sheen,
fields huddle
under voluminous
milky wraps,
branches sway,
swathed
in scarves of
gossamer,
and a
navy velvet
drape of
sky
is
pinned
with a
silver
crescent.

Twelve steps to salvation

Alcoholic, workaholic,
co-dependent, overeater,
shopaholic, all find their
cure in a simple twelve-step
program. Standing in line at the
supermarket I discover I can be sexy
healthy, wealthy, organized, in just a
few easy-to-follow steps. I can even step
my way from fat to thin in just minutes a day.
It seems that even God has decided to get in on
the action. Jesus left his twelve disciples an example,

that they should
follow in his steps.

Malchus

"He who has ears to hear, let him hear" (Mark 4:9).

In the inky black
torches flickering, blades flashing
swift as a scythe
Peter swung his sword
severing the right ear of
the high priest's servant

Malchus felt a searing
heat, blood gushing, fear
rising with Jesus' hand
eyes squeezed tight, teeth
clenched, he braced himself
for the next blow
reeled with the surge
of instant restoration

As the wind whispered past
his ear cool as the touch
of God, he heard the scrape
of metal swords
resheathed, the flutter
of tattered cloaks, the slap
of sandaled feet, the hissing
susurrus of insinuation,
the silence of Jesus
shouting
follow me.

Ye gods

(Jeremiah 10:5)

Images of
molten gold,
hammered silver
shrouded in
sappharine
and violet
deaf mute, lame,
laughable
like scarecrows
in a
cucumber patch.

Vegetable garden

In this
carefully
turned over
plot
I have
sown
lines of
metaphors
now ripe
for picking —
purple
hearts, multi-colored
heads, silken
ears, a snowman's
nose, green
pearls in a ziplocked
pouch, strings
of yellow candles
unlit, whole
forests of
achromatous
trees.

Second birth

(Psalm 116:15)

Mother earth is
heaving tonight. Cradled
in her womb, the old man
waits in silence.
Sensing stirrings
within, without,
stradled
between two worlds.
It's his experience
makes him less resistant
to the birthing
follows the familiar pull
and push down the dark,
narrow
canal
into waiting light.
Figures in white
hold out robe and crown.
He finds himself
new born,
gasps his first breath
of Heaven's air, utters
his first muted cry
since travelling
through
the shadow of death.
Stretching,
he tests limbs,
has he wings to fly?
"Oh, Abba, we rejoice," the angels cry,
"For unto us another son has died."

Sprung forth

For the first time, I hold you
in my arms
Child from the womb of another
like a crocus
Pushing its way through the snow
you've sprung
Banishing the harsh winter
of my infertility.

The Question

I stand in line at the supermarket,
a box of Kotex pads under my arm,
reading the *National Enquirer:*
"Seventy-year old woman gives birth
to twins."
I contemplate the possibility.
Behind me in a shopping
cart, blonde curls and baby blue
eyes, sits the daughter of my
dreams. I smile as she boldly looks
me over. "Where's your baby?"
she asks. I turn away
hiding the pain now welling
out of my eyes. Sshh! her mother
admonishes. She looks
confused. It was a simple
question. Like my
womb, I am empty
of answers.

About the author:

Joan Dower Kosmachuk has written three books: *Hide God's Word, Rebecca's Summer* and *Jennie's Secret* (for review of *Jennie's Secret* see Dec. 22, 1995, issue of CC). The latter two books are pre-teen novels. *Rebecca's Summer* deals with a young girl whose mother is considering abortion, and *Jennie's Secret* sees a young girl getting involved in the issue of adoption. In addition, Joan has had articles, short stories and poems published in a variety of magazines.

Joan is the director of Jewels for Jesus, a Christian adoption agency operating out of Mississauga, Ont. She attends Bramalea Alliance Church and lives in Brampton, Ont.

Some of Joan's poems spring forth from her work with couples. Infertile couples are misunderstood in the Christian community, she says. "The Christian thing to do is to get married and have kids. If you don't have kids, people tell you you don't have enough faith or you should just adopt." She also feels that adoption gets a negative press in our society and should be more seriously considered by girls who don't feel they're in a position to parent a child.

Joan is taking courses at Redeemer College in Ancaster, Ont., on a part-time basis.

Education

Seerveld named Calvin College 'distinguished alumnus'

Calvin names two who have brought honor to the college

Phil de Haan

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. — Dr. Calvin Seerveld was one of two 1996 recipients of Calvin College's Distinguished Alumni Award. The other winner was Vern Ehlers, a physicist and former Calvin professor who is now a U.S. Congressman. The awards were presented on May 18 at Calvin's commencement ceremonies.

Calvin's Distinguished Alumni Award has been presented annually since 1966 by the Calvin Alumni Association and is the highest honor that the college awards to its graduates. Names are gathered via an extensive nomination process and honorees are then selected by an independent committee endorsed by the Calvin Alumni Association Board.

Recipients of the award "have made significant contributions to their field of endeavor, are recognized by their associates for outstanding achievements and manifest a Christian commitment that reflects honor upon Calvin College."

From fish to art

Cal Seerveld grew up with the smell of fish in his nostrils. The son of a fishmonger, Seerveld began working in his dad's Patchogue, N.Y., store at the age of 10. From then on he spent much of his free time — Saturdays and summer vacations included — cleaning and selling fish.

CC FILES

Dr. Calvin Seerveld

Those early childhood experiences shaped Seerveld, a 1952 Calvin graduate, in significant ways, giving him both an inextricable work ethic and a blue-collar sensibility about life which linger in all that he does, particularly in his work in aesthetics. The aroma of the ocean clings to him still.

"I believe strongly in the role art can play in an ordinary person's life," Seerveld says. "That ties in directly with my fishmonger's past. It costs money to go to an art museum. It's not something fishermen do very often. The museums often are like holy places. I think they should be more like parks where you can laugh and talk and joke. It would open a whole new world for people."

Seerveld, who taught for 13 years at Trinity College in Palos Heights, Ill., and almost 25 years at the Institute for Christian Studies in Toronto, Ont., has a unique approach to his discipline of aesthetics. "For me," he says, "aesthetics is not just about art or theories of art. It's a theory of playfulness, jokes, games, imaginative things."

Seerveld's wide embrace of aesthetics is reflected in his many different scholarly interests. In addition to articles and books, he also has made his mark as a composer of songs. He was on the study committee for the latest edition of the Christian Reformed Church's *Psalter Hymnal* — what he calls "perhaps the single most important thing I've worked on" — and contributed 39 songs to the 641-song volume.

Advice to Calvin grads from a 'distinguished alumnus'

Once you live in cultures other than your home-grown one, you can become more self-critically aware of your faith and ethnic identity. Wisdom, I recently heard from Henk de Bruyn, director of the Indian Family Centre, a ministry of the Christian Reformed Church in Winnipeg, Man., is this: a person needs to listen acutely and melt visionarily into the life of the poor of the earth if he or she wants to understand the discipleship of Jesus Christ and restore his or her own unredeemed Dutch/French/German/American/Canadian ethnicity to a wholesome, colorful maturity.

Let me encourage you to shuck the pragmatist idea of a career and accept the calling of breaking the bread of life to the poor (who may have a battery-operated TV), the powerless (who may have a two-car garage): practise the upside-down biblical calling of compassionately serving the disenfranchised (who may be very intelligent rebels) or the lukewarm ignorant (whose home decor and music may taste like warm spit).

God's comfortable people at large in the land, I believe, are often blithely unaware of our oppressive Euro-American imperialism (assuming, for example, the lingua franca of the world internet will be American English), and too seldom realize money can be the stonewalling-in fatal kiss of Midas, unless we promptly and wisely give it away.

Nothing brings liberating joy like giving away to your neighbor, for Christ's sake, God's good gifts to yourself, including a college education. That's what Calvin College's Latin motto — Cor meum tibi offero, Domine prompte et sincere — *means in basic English: let everything you have and be go up in smoke like a living sacrifice for our Lord of all the earth (Romans 12:1-2).*

I hope your life will be "distinguished" by that kind of bonfire.

Excerpts from Calvin Seerveld's remarks to graduates and others upon receiving Calvin College's Distinguished Alumni Award.

Pedagogeries

Year-round schooling

Alyce Oosterhuis

Now that warmer weather has finally arrived in Edmonton, my teenagers are counting the "number of sleeps" before summer vacation breaks their routine of school, work and soccer. "Two months of freedom," they ecstatically whisper as they gaze out of the school room windows at a smiling sun, gently blowing breeze and shadow-speckled sidewalks. Two months without assignments, tests, bells, regulations, policies, demerits, deadlines and goals.

There is a movement afoot in this country that wishes to see a change in this 10 month schooling-two month vacation schedule. "Too much time is wasted when students have to review everything they learned in the previous school year!" "Too much repetition takes away from all the additional learning that could take place!" "Too many parents have great difficulties fulfilling child care needs with their limited vacation periods!" "Too little structure breeds boredom, discontent, delinquency, laziness!"

No time to 'be'

As I hear the slogans, I decide that the issue is really "goals." We are a goal-oriented society that encourages its youth to "grow up," to "prepare for a future," to "plan for retirement." Everything has a purpose and everyone has a place in fulfilling that purpose. Our time is intended to be well spent; our talents are given for development, our careers are assumed to be worthwhile. We are responsible, stewardly, dedicated, faithful, accountable, responsive, visionary and productive. We seldom just "are."

And I am as guilty as the rest as I encourage our children to save, stop wasting time, practise their skills, plan for college, dream of their future, prepare to take up their tasks. Whether the goals are short or long term, it is the future that tends to drive the present.

At a camping weekend a few weeks ago we sat huddled under a makeshift tent discussing our inability to conceptualize an eternal existence and an endless space. In a world where "for everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven," the notions of timelessness and eternity sometimes fill us with the dread of aimlessness.

Teaching about eternity

Maybe that is what summer vacations can teach us: how to be and do from day to day without short- or long-term goals. An unstructured summer in which we just "are." Our children can have a foretaste of just being, doing for the sake of just doing, playing for the laughter of play, cycling for the experience of cycling, gardening for the love of gardening, climbing for the joy of climbing, reading for the pleasure of reading.

But, if the summer vacation is intended to be a foretaste of heaven then, when our youth eagerly await school in September because they are so bored with just being, has our summer experiment been a failure? or another vanity? (The very notion of summer vacation as a heavenly experiment implies a goal that tries to defy "vanities.") Maybe we should ask the young child or the sparrow or the lily in the field. It may be that as adults we have lost (or overlaid) the ability to trust simply and enjoy fully what God intended eternally. All I know, at this point, is that I have argued myself out of supporting year-round schooling and summer camps and travel itineraries. Let the summer begin!

Alyce Horzelenberg Oosterhuis, who teaches educational psychology at the King's University College in Edmonton — when she's teaching — finds that her most laudable summer goals are infrequently met. At such times she tends to rationalize her inadequacies.

Feature

Are strikers above the law?

Harry Antonides

Driving into the city of Sarnia, Ont., during the recent five-week strike of Ontario public servants, I saw first hand how this strike endangered the safety and lives of the public. While driving on a two-lane highway after dark, suddenly a substantial pile of snow, hardened by periods of melting and refreezing, loomed in front of me, blocking the right-hand lane. No warning lights, no markers. Fortunately, the left lane was clear.

Twenty-year old Chris Zehr was not so fortunate. On March 8 he died after his car slid into oncoming traffic on an icy road near Stratford, Ont. A spokesperson for the 67,000-member Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU) was quick to assert that the accident had nothing to do with the strike. But others were not so sure. An investigating OPP officer, who found the road to be "extremely dangerous," stated that his call for a salting crew was met with a lengthy delay.

Innocent bystanders hurt

All OPSEU members called by ministry supervisors to report for work either could not be reached or claimed to be unable to work. Ministry officials finally received permission from OPSEU to use a private contractor to salt the roads from a yard located 30 km away.

While the effect of the strike in many areas was not nearly as obvious and dangerous as the winter driving conditions on the province's highways, there were still many innocent bystanders who were hurt by the strike. Especially hard hit were 290 small and medium-sized slaughterhouses across the province employing some 3,000 workers. Meat inspectors also went out on strike, and animals may not be slaughtered without an inspector present.

There were also reports of jail guards who, despite the fact that they belong to a category of essential workers by law forbidden to strike, still refused to work, causing considerable disruption in the operation of a number of prisons.

Troubling questions

The damaging effects of the long strike raise some troubling questions about the use of strikes in the public service. Furthermore, the strikers' attitude toward the law and the government's role as upholder of the law were clearly central issues in this strike. This was made especially obvious when strikers barred nonstriking workers and even Members of Parliament from entering Queen's Park, the provincial parliament buildings in Toronto.

A confrontation between protestors and a riot squad at Queen's Park during the OPSEU strike.

Early on there were sporadic incidences of strong-arm tactics by pickets, including verbal and physical abuse, against those who had chosen to remain at work. In Sudbury, pickets shouted insults as they marched outside the houses of colleagues who ignored the strike call. Striking OPSEU members in Toronto distributed a leaflet describing in blasphemous tones the creation of what they called a "scab."

An Ottawa bookstore sold T-shirts with the message that compared the Ontario government's policies with those of the Nazis. This prompted a protest by the Canadian Jewish Congress: "It is obscene to compare Harris to a Nazi. When such absurd comparisons are made the evil of Nazism is belittled. Nazism is a depraved doctrine. The unseemliness of comparing it to a democratically elected leader in Canada is obvious to all" (*Toronto Sun*, March 6).

Meanwhile, much of the action was concentrated — where else? — at Queen's Park. OPSEU pickets were reinforced by burly steelworkers, autoworkers and other union activists. They demanded I.D. cards and delayed peoples' entry into government buildings 15 minutes or more.

The press gallery at Queen's Park received a letter from the union giving it permission to cross the picket line. The media, so quick to harp at perceived and real injustices, meekly went along with a tactic that if tried by any other group would have been denounced with indignation.

The picket line tension came to a head on March 18, the opening day of the Ontario Legislature. The pickets were out in full force, barring people, including MPPs, from entering government buildings. Here is a report on what happened to Municipal Affairs Minister Al Leach when he attempted to enter the building, as reported in the *Toronto Star* March 19:

Metro officers intervened again when Leach wandered into the crowd of demonstrators. He was surrounded, spat on and pelted with a balled-up paper cup and a half-eaten doughnut. A Metro police officer moved quickly to Leach's side and was instantly joined by several colleagues.

"Are you crazy... walking into the middle of this?" one officer asked the Minister. The officers inched Leach toward the entrance of the Frost Building, but the crowd was too thick. Eventually, the Metro officers gave up and whisked Leach away in one of their vans.

The same report described how Tory and Liberal MPPs ran around Queen's Park trying to find a door that they could enter. But every entrance was barred. Exasperated Liberal House leader Jim Bradley told the pickets: "I'm the leader of the Opposition. If you don't let me in, who's going to ask the questions?" He was no more successful than others, and ended up getting "an earful from the OPSEU members."

Excusing violence

OPSEU spokespersons consistently underplayed the violent behavior of pickets or excused it by saying that they had a right to be angry and to fight for their jobs in the face of the injustice imposed on them by the Harris government.

But the rough behavior of the pickets was also intended to send a clear message to wavering union members — don't even think about crossing the picket line. Intimidation works.

Despite the nasty treatment of those who braved the picket lines, some 6,000 workers continued working. To prevent further breakdown in the ranks, OPSEU members distributed a flyer warning that anyone who crossed a picket line would be forced to pay "supplementary dues" of 30 per cent of their wages for the next five years. It urged strikebreakers to "join in the picket line, say you are sorry and we will forgive and forget it happened."

Was this tactic effective? As one nonstriker reported: "I had three friends who were coming back with me (to work) Monday, but when they saw that they said, 'No way'" (*Toronto Star*, March 10).

The rough behavior of the pickets was intended to send a clear message to wavering union members — don't even think about crossing the picket line. Intimidation works.

The strike was settled on March 31 with 95 per cent voting in favor of the government offer. A careful comparison of the latest government offer before the strike with what was eventually accepted indicates only marginal differences. But OPSEU president Leah Casselman heralded this settlement as a victory for workers. She put the best possible face on the strike by emphasizing that it had taught the Harris government a lesson and, above all, that the workers had gained a new confidence in their ability to stand together as a union.

As strikes always do, this one left a lot of bitterness in its wake. Bitterness toward the government, but also to workers who had crossed the picket line. Members of one Toronto-area OPSEU local must appear before a disciplinary hearing to answer charges of strike breaking. If guilty, they face a fine of 100 per cent of the amount they earned while they were working during the strike. In contrast, the government agreed not to pursue any charges against jail guards who had acted in defiance of their legal obligations.

Political strike

Amid the sound and fury surrounding this strike, it is difficult to make sense of the real issues. But at its heart, this strike was very much political in nature. The fight was an ideological one over the role of government.

This is not a new issue, nor is it confined to Ontario. In Alberta, Premier Klein also faced plenty of criticism for cutting public expenditures. And it's happening in all Western, developed countries. Think, for example, of the recent turmoil in France when that government attempted to rein in unsustainable public expenditures.

The truth is that we are witnessing a scaling down of the welfare state, which has run into the wall of limited resources — and that includes financial and nonfinancial resources. The dispute is now very much between those who deny that reality, because they persevere in their belief that the state is the central agency for managing all of society, and those who believe in a much more limited role for the state. The one side gives priority to the public, whereas the other stresses the primacy of the private.

No respect

What muddies the waters is that there is very little open and respectful debate. This is an age of instant solutions, a pragmatic mindset, a preoccupation with process and a disdain for substance. It is much abetted by a media that relishes the immediate, the sensational, the catchy phrase.

Proponents of an interventionist role for the state invariably wrap themselves in the mantle of moral superiority. Their opponents are not merely mistaken or misguided, people with whom one can yet discuss

See **LAW** *page 14 ...*

Feature/Advice

Law or intimidation?

... continued from page 13

in a civil and respectful manner. No, they're immoral and evil because they do not care about the plight of the poor and the vulnerable. With such people one does not discuss. They deserve to be denounced, and they are certainly unfit to govern. (Read for example, *Toronto Star* columnist Dalton Camp.)

Those who stress the primacy of the individual argue that they are no less concerned about the truly needy. In fact, they say that perpetuating our present course is a sure recipe for wrecking the economy and worsening the plight of everyone, especially the poor.

By taking the moral high ground, while resorting to despicable behavior, OPSEU lost all moral legitimacy.

And so the arguments go, like two deaf people shouting at one another.

No one should underestimate the profound worry and fear felt by Ontario public servants faced with the prospect of the dismissal of more than 13,000 in their ranks. But even OPSEU conceded the inevitability of large-scale layoffs. Their fight was about slowing down the pace of layoffs and increasing the size of the severance packages.

We must recognize OPSEU's right to promote the interest of its members but draw the line when it pursues that interest without any regard for the social, political and economic realities.

It is difficult to see how OPSEU's negotiation style could succeed. Instead of seeking viable and reasonable compromises, the union insisted on demonizing the government and claiming that it is unfit to govern. Ultimately, the overriding issue became the behavior of the strikers, not the details of the collective agreement. These details were eventually settled with the support of an overwhelming majority of workers. But the strikers' behavior turned it into a choice between the rule of law versus rule by intimidation.

Given the current climate of fractious public debate, we should not be too surprised about this sort of lawless behavior. Will we see more of it? Probably. Once an opponent is demonized, it becomes a fight between good (us) and evil (them). It's easy to lose restraint when on a crusade.

By taking the moral high ground, while resorting to despicable behavior, OPSEU lost all moral legitimacy.

Larry Horowitz, writing in a letter to the *Toronto Star* (April 25) related the experience of a friend, an entertainer, whose engagement was cancelled due to the strike. "This poor man, like so many others, scratches out an honest living day by day, and has fallen victim to the massive union organization representing people who earn a far more reliable and comfortable income than he. Any protest, in the name of justice, that causes agony to the innocent is void of justice."

Bully-boy tactics hurt not just individuals. Those who spit at the law and stomp on the rights of others demean every one of us. They further erode the veneer of decency and civility so essential for a just society.

Harry Antonides is researcher director for the Work Research Foundation and editor of its publication WRF Comment, from which this article was reprinted.

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Are we becoming too suspicious?

Peter and Marja are IN

Dear P&M:

I wasn't able to attend one of the recent sessions held by CRC abuse prevention co-ordinator Beth Swagman, but I would definitely like us to be able to keep abuse from happening in the Christian community. Not that I like the topic of abuse prevention very much. Maybe because I feel that there's a lot of distrust assumed in abuse prevention policies.

The emphasis today is so much on protection. Condoms are sold in schools because kids are said to need protection from pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases. We have to wear sunscreen to protect ourselves against the harmful rays of the Bridegroom Coming Forth from His Pavilion. And now abuse policies are implemented in churches because children need to be protected against volunteer babysitters. Are we ever paying for our sinfulness! It makes me sad. My wife and I cannot babysit in church together unless another unrelated person is present. Are we carrying things too far?

Dear Abuse Prevention Policies:

"Don't you trust me any more?" This question seems to be the most common response to the abuse policies that are being implemented in the Christian Reformed Church. No wonder. The suggested policies insist on a minimum of two attendants in the nursery, regardless of the number of children. One female or one male attendant alone are unacceptable. All other children and youth activities are also to be led by pairs of volunteers at all times. And these pairs may never be from the same family. A husband and wife won't do; neither will a father and son or a mother and daughter. Since minors may serve only under adult supervision, two teenagers won't do either. The policies insist that you pair unrelated adults, or add a third adult if two family members or two teenaged friends are scheduled. You can imagine the demands this will place on our pool of volunteers!

These new regulations mean that we, Peter and Marja, may not babysit, lead children's worship or teach a VBS or Pioneers class together. One of us would always have to exchange with another adult. If we insisted on doing it together we would have to find a third, unrelated person. Neither Christy or Rachel, our two daughters, would qualify as a helper. And if an evening service saw only one or two children in nursery, Marja alone or Christy and Rachel together wouldn't be able to look after the child(ren). An additional, unrelated adult would have to stay to help.

The person responsible for drafting and communicating these policies to the churches spoke to a gathering of officebearers and spouses in March at Providence CRC, Beamsville. Beth Swagman proved to be an articulate, effective and no-nonsense speaker. She took us through a recent survey which found that 28 per cent of our denomination's membership had experienced physical, sexual and/or emotional abuse. She anticipated every objection and question that we could possibly have about the necessity or stringency of the policies recommended by the denominational abuse prevention ministry. And she introduced the concept of a standing advisory panel that will serve Classis Niagara as a hearing committee in the event of an abuse allegation.

Let's get back to the issue of trust which you raised in your letter. As Beth Swagman explained it, the policies are designed not just to protect children from the relatively small risk of abuse that occurs in a church; they are also intended to protect volunteers against an abuse allegation. If a child or teenager in our care made the accusation that something inappropriate took place, the defense of a single volunteer or two related volunteers does not have much weight. Such an accusation, however, is less likely to happen and can be more easily defended when another, unrelated adult is able to corroborate what took place. These initially upsetting policies, in other words, make things safe for volunteers and staff as well as children.

Actually, the abuse prevention ministry recommendations are not new to the way Wendy de Jong, Jubilee Fellowship CRC's secretary, and Peter work together. Their offices are in a high traffic area of the church. Between the two offices is a door with a window. That door is often open. When Peter needs to make a confidential telephone call or conduct a counselling session, there's always the window in the door to provide a sense of surveillance. (Yes, he's aware of faces that peek in to see if he's free, and no, it doesn't bother him). Their own working relationship always includes an open door. As a result they were caught this week...; caught praying that is! They try to meet together once a week to discuss their workloads and close their staff meeting with prayer.

There is a big part of us that shares your sadness about the need for all these precautions. Those of us who heard Beth Swagman, however, were convinced and reassured by her reasons, namely, the protection of children from abuse AND the protection of volunteers and church staff from false allegations.

Write to: P & M, 16 Kimbermount Drive, St. Catharines, ON L2N 5V6.

Peter and Marja Slofstra are a pastor and wife team living in St. Catharines, Ont. They are assisted by an advisory panel consisting of Herman de Jong, Bill Lidkea, Alan Vandermaas, Marian Van Til and Bert Witvoet.

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ATTENTION!

a) *Christian Courier* reserves the right to print classifieds using our usual format.

b) A sheet with information about an obituary sent by funeral homes is *not* acceptable since it leads to errors and confusion.

c) Photographs sent by fax *are not* acceptable. If you wish a photo included, send us the original.

d) *Christian Courier* will not be responsible for any errors due to handwritten or phoned-in advertisements.

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NEWLYWEDS & NEW PARENTS

We offer a one-year subscription for only $25.00 (GST incl.) to the couples whose wedding is announced in the *Christian Courier* and to the parents of the child whose birth announcement appears in our paper. To facilitate matters, we encourage those who request the wedding or birth announcement to enclose $25.00 and the couple's correct address.

Christian Courier
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St. Catharines, ON L2W 1A1
Phone: (905) 682-8311
Fax: (905) 682-8313

Births

VREUGDENHIL:
Thankful to God, Nick and Helene Vreugdenhil are pleased to announce the birth of a healthy baby daughter

SARAH ELIZABETH

born on June 1, 1996, in Tokyo, Japan, weighing 9 lbs., 6 oz.
A little sister for Nicholas and Stephanie. The 12th grandchild for Albert and Grace Mast and the third grandchild for Kees and Liz Vreugdenhil of Chatham, Ont.
Address: 22-29-B Fukasawa, 7-chome, Setagaya-Ku, Tokyo 158, Japan

Marriages

DEEN:
"And so we know and rely on the love God has for us"
(1 John 4:16a).
We, the children, invite you to share in the joy of the marriage uniting our parents

LUMMIE DEEN
and
HERMAN DEEN

The celebration will take place, D.V., on Friday, July 5, 1996, at 6 p.m. in the Chr. Ref. Church, Drayton, Ont. Open house from 7:00-8:30 p.m., in the Fellowship Hall of the church. No gifts please. Your presence is our cherished gift.
Gertie & John Schnieders
Audrey & Carl Herder
John & Yvonne Deen
Cora Jane & Fred Stevens
Theresa & Neil Scholten
Wilma Deen & Paul Steedman
and 19 grandchildren.
Gertie & Frank Hansma
Jane & Tony Mulder
John & Shirley Deen
Maynard & Joyce Deen
Jeanette & Cecil Greydanus
and 18 grandchildren.

GUILLAUME/MAXWELL:
Ann and Frank Guillaume of Thornhill, Ont., are pleased to announce the forthcoming marriage of their son

FRANCOIS MARCEL
to
KARLA JAYNE MAXWELL

daughter of Mrs. Jan Madigan and Mr. George Maxwell.
The ceremony will be held, D.V., on Saturday, June 29, 1996, at 3:30 p.m., at the Willowdale Chr. Ref. Church, 70 Hilda Avenue, North York, Ont.
The couple's address will be: 144 Horsham Avenue, North York, ON M2N 2A2

TERMORSHUIZEN/OLDEJANS:
Arnold and Tina Termorshuizen of St. Catharines, Ont., are happy to announce the forthcoming marriage of their daughter

SANDRA DIANE
to
MARVIN JOHN OLDEJANS

son of Peter and Rose Feddema of Bowmanville, Ont. The ceremony will take place, D.V., on Saturday, July 6, 1996, at 2 p.m., in Jubilee Fellowship Chr. Ref. Church, St. Catharines, Ont., Rev. Erick Schuringa officiating.

Open House

Open house and farewell for

ARIE and JANE VANDERSTOEL

on Saturday, June 15, 1996, from 2-4 p.m., at the Drayton Calvin Chr. School.

Adoption

VELDHUIS:
"Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like sifting shadows" (James 1:17).
We give thanks to God, the giver of life, who has sent, in His time, our special chosen child,

DANIELLE ADRIANNA BEVERLEE

born on April 4, 1996, weighing 5 lbs.
Very proud and blessed parents are Paul and Irene Veldhuis. Sharing in our joy are beaming grandparents Mrs. Beverley Slofstra (5th grandchild) and Mr. John Veldhuis (19th grandchild) of Jarvis, Ont. Rejoicing with us in heaven are Pake Allan Slofstra and Grandma Gerda Veldhuis.
Home address: 4357 Glancaster Rd., R.R. #3, Mount Hope, ON L0R 1W0

Anniversaries

1956 June 29 1996

It is with great joy that we announce the 40th wedding anniversary of our parents

CLARENCE and JOYCE BOONSTRA
(nee LUIJK)

We are thankful that God has blessed them with 40 years of marriage. We hope and pray for God's continued guidance in the years to come. Love and congratulations from:
Mary & Fred Elgersma — Alberton, Ont.
Dylan, Tim, Jessi
Rick & Nancy Boonstra — Burlington, Ont.
Sarah, Cameron
Iris & George Hoytema — Burlington, Ont.
Kevin, Michelle, Brandyn
Bruce & Heather Boonstra — Toronto, Ont.
Olivia

We invite you to share this event with us at an open house on Saturday, June 29, 1996, at Bethel Chr. Ref. Church, Waterdown, Ont., from 2-5 p.m. Best wishes only please.
Address: 1231 Nathaniel Cr., Burlington, ON L7S 2A6

Child Care

Attention Parents,St. Catharines

A **Christian childcare centre** is in the developmental stages in the Port Dalhousie area. The significance of implementing Chr. values in the early stages of a child's life is very important. We feel we can meet these needs through quality Chr. early childhood education. Please feel free to contact **Janet Vanderlee at (905)562-5604** or **Susan Johnson (905) 687-8506** for further information.

Anniversaries

Congratulations to Henry and Leny Lammers (nee Vanden Berg) on the occasion of their 30th wedding anniversary!

Brampton St. Catharines
1966 July 1 1996

With thanks to God we announce the 30th wedding anniversary of our parents

HENRY and LENY LAMMERS
(nee VANDEN BERG)

Congratulations and love from their children:
William Lammers — Grimsby, Ont.
Allan & Amy Lammers (Swets) — Lansing, Mich.
Audrey Lammers — Grand Rapids, Mich.
Rita Joan Lammers — Grand Rapids, Mich.
Home address: 1 Dale Court, St. Catharines, ON L2M 1K9

Vacations

For rent: Are you interested in a **vacation in Newfoundland** this summer? Our fully furnished house on the outskirts of St. John's is available for rent in July and August to couples who would like to take advantage of this opportunity. Rental for **one week is $300.** For **two weeks or more** it is **$250 per week.** Contact us as soon as possible by phone, but not after June 28, at **(709) 368-7588** or write to
C. Van Dijk, 333 Bay Bulls Rd., St. John's, NF A1G 1B9

FARMHOUSE IN FRIESLAND. Due to cancellation because of illness, available from June 28-July 18 (or part thereof), comfortable furnished **vacation farmhouse**. Many extras. In village 5 min. from Dokkum. Only Dfl.450 per week. For info. call **Ed Straatsma, phone (519) 622-6764 or fax (519) 622-8538.**

Anniversaries

1971 July 16 1996

"Thus is the man blessed who fears the Lord. May the Lord bless you from Zion all the days of your life" (Ps.28:4,5b).
With joy and thankfulness to God, we announce the upcoming 25th anniversary of our parents

KEITH and ALIE VANDERMEULEN
(nee ROSIER)

Mom and Dad, we pray that God will continue to bless you, and we thank you for the blessing that you have been to us.
With love,
Kim & Paul Dalen — Omaha, Nebraska
Denise Vandermeulen & Lan Luyt (friend) — London, Ont.
Jennifer Vandermeulen — London, Ont.

All friends and relatives are invited to celebrate with us at an open house, Saturday, July 13, 1996, between 1:30-4:00 p.m., at their home.
Home address: 9 Masefield Crescent, London, ON N5V 1M9

Personal

Widower, **lower sixties, retired and in good health,** likes to meet retired Christian lady **for friendship and/or possible relationship (southwest or Central Ontario). Please reply with note, name and phone number to** File #2638, 4-261 Martindale Rd., St. Catharines, ON L2W 1A1.

Neat widow, 71 years of age, **likes to meet neat gentleman,** 70-75 years of age. **Please send letters to File #2646, c/o Christian Courier, 4-261 Martindale Rd., St. Catharines, ON L2W 1A1.**

CLASSIFIEDS

Obituaries

On May 31, 1996.

JAN ARIE VAN OS

of Leduc, Alta., passed away at the age of 57 years.

He is survived by his loving wife Cornelia van Os.

His children:

Arja (Arnoud) Colombyn — Hay Lakes

Samantha

Leendert-Jan (Caroline) — Ede, the Neth.

Daan (Andrea) — Noordwolde, the Neth.

His brother and sisters:

Annie van Os — Woerden, the Neth.

Corrie (Jillis) Los — Woubrugge, the Neth.

Arie (Marianne) van Os — Linschoten, the Neth.

Marie (Egge) van den Berg — Ylst, the Neth.

Joke (Leen) Koning — Hardenberg, the Neth.

Mother-in-law Mrs. A. Vergunst-Zeeuw, Nieuwkoop, the Neth., sister-in-law Aad van Dobben, Nieuwkoop,the Neth., brothers-in-law Daan (Marchien) Vergunst,Driebergen, the Neth., Piet (Annie) Vergunst, Zeist, the Neth.

Funeral service was held on Wednesday, June 5, 1996, at 2 p.m., at the Ebenezer Chr. Ref. Church, Leduc, Alta., with Rev. Harry Vriend officiating. Interment took place in the Leduc Cemetery.

Correspondence address: Cornelia van Os, R.R. 2, Leduc, AB T9E 2X2, Phone: (403) 986-0050

Anniversaries

1946 June 18 1996

"Your love, O Lord, reaches to the heavens, your faithfulness to the skies" (Ps.36:5).

PAUL and BERNICE SCHROTENBOER (nee OATMEN)

It is with joy and thankfulness to God that we will celebrate our parents' and grandparents' 50th wedding anniversary. Congratulations and much love from all of us.

Calvin

Paul, Kristin, Alison

Murray & Jane

Justin, April & Khalid, Noel

Jerry & Karen

Ron & Mary

Brad, Tim, Megan

Thanks to our Lord for the care and blessings He has provided over the years. May He continue to keep you in His care and give you more years of happiness together.

Friends and relatives are welcome to celebrate with us at an open house on Saturday, June 22, 1996, from 2-4 p.m., at the Princeton Chr. Ref. Church, 5330 Kalamazoo Ave., Grand Rapids, Mich.

Home address: 1677 Gentian Drive, Grand Rapids, MI 49508

Obituaries

"My grace is sufficient for you" (2 Cor.12:9).

On May 22, 1996, the Lord took home our dearly loved mother, grandmother and great-grandmother

JOHANNA ELIZABETH HUISKAMP (nee EBBERS)

at the age of 82 years.

Even though she was confused and lived in the past for the last three years, she always knew that the Lord was her Shepherd. It is a great comfort for us to know that she is now at peace.

She was predeceased by her husband Gerhard Willem Huiskamp in 1982.

Dear mother of:

William & Henny Huiskamp — Bloomfield

Henry & Audrey Huiskamp — Burlington

Diena & Andy Ypma — Carrying Place

Her greatest joy was her 10 grandchildren and 11 great-grandchildren. She is survived by one brother in the Netherlands.

Correspondence address: William Huiskamp, R.R. #1, Bloomfield, ON K0K 1G0

Job Opportunities

Youth worker needed, Hebron Chr. Ref. Church, east of Metro Toronto, is looking for a part-time Youth Worker. Our goal is to develop the 'Nurture Model.' For a job description call **(905) 668-5141** or write **Hebron CRC, 407 Crawforth St., Whitby, ON L1N 3R6.**

Obituaries

March 8, 1912 - May 26, 1996

On Sunday, May 26, 1996, the Lord took home our dear husband, father, grandfather, and great-grandfather

JOHN BERKELAAR SR.

Loving husband of Anneke Berkelaar (van Rossum).

Father of:

Maria — St. Lucia

Frank — at home

John & Jo-Anne — Truro, N.S.

Peter & Jannie — Belmont, N.S.

Gus — Surrey, B.C.

Marretje — Lunenburg, N.S.

eight grandchildren and one great-grandchild.

Correspondence address: R.R. #1, Belmont, NS B0M 1C0

Kollumerpomp Grimsby

Fr. Ont.

May 17, 1909 - May 31, 1996

GERTRUDE TIMMER (nee GEERTJE VAN DYK)

was called home to be with the Lord, in her 88th year.

She is survived by her husband Jan Timmer.

Psalm 27:1

Correspondence address: Mr. Jan Timmer, Shalom Manor, 12 Bartlett Avenue, Room 237, Grimsby, ON L3M 4N5

Miscellaneous

I would like to buy a ship which is built in a big bottle/jar.

Phone (905) 319-2219

Congratulations to Paul and Bernice Schrotenboer (nee Oatmen) on the occasion of their 50th wedding anniversary!

Teachers

BELLEVILLE, Ont.: Quinte Chr. High School. We are a small (115 students), dynamic Christian High School located on the shores of beautiful Bay of Quinte in the city of Belleville, Ont. We are inviting applications for a **teaching position** opening for the school year 1996/97. Teaching responsibilities include the areas of history, law, world religions and related fields. Applicants with a Christian college background and a willingness to coach and give leadership in extra-curricular activities will be given preference. A living relationship with Jesus Christ, a love for children and a passion for learning are a must. Please send your applications, with resume to:

The Principal
Quinte Chr. High School
289 Pinnacle Street
Belleville, ON K8N 3B3

SURREY, B.C.: Fraser Valley Chr. High School, an interdenominational school in the Reformed tradition serving families and students in the lower Fraser Valley, has a **teaching opening** in the area of **art** for the 1996/97 school year. We are accepting applications for the **full-time** position of **administrative assistant**. The qualified individual must be able to handle a broad range of administrative and office functions. Word processing, Desktop Publishing and editing skills are required. Effective interpersonal skills, project management and supervisory abilities are additional requirements. An associate degree or its equivalent with experience in a similar position are required. Applicants should send resumes to:

Mr. Al Boerema, Principal
Fraser Valley Chr. High School
15353-92 Avenue, Surrey, BC
V3R 1C3
Phone (604) 581-1033

NEWMARKET, Ont.: Holland Marsh Distr. Chr. School has a **possible opening** for a **Grade 7** teacher. Are you strong in music? Would you like to join a young dynamic staff? If you have a "Reformed" perspective, love children, and are a qualified teacher, please fax your resume or call Henry Lise now. **Fax (905) 775-2395 or phone (905) 775-3701.**

For Rent

Apartment for rent, London, Ont. Share 2-bedr. furnished apartment, walking distance to downtown, on direct busroute to university. For more information please call Chatham: **(519) 352-3408.**

Personal

ONE TO ANOTHER

Christian companion magazine. Hundreds of readers Canada-wide. Single issue $5.

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Lethbridge, AB T1J 4A2

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Church News

Christian Reformed Church

Calls declined:

— to First CRC, Red Deer, Alta., Rev. Fred Heslinga of First CRC, Hamilton, Ont.

Address correction:

— The New Life Community Church of Pickering (Ajax), Ont., is still meeting at 1955 Valley Farm Road, Pickering. The church's new **mailing address** is: 816 Krosno Blvd., Pickering, ON L1W 1G8. Telephone: (905) 839-9814.

Miscellaneous

Kerkdiensten op cassette in de Nederlandse taal

U kunt zich nu abonneren op deze prekendienst, b.v.:

a) een cassette iedere week;
b) twee cassettes maandelijks;
c) een cassette maandelijks.

Prijs $3,50 per cassette
(plus $1,50 als u de cassette wilt houden)

Voor inlichtingen schrijf naar:
Jack & Lenie Brouwer
27 Alpaca Drive
Scarborough, ON M1J 2Z8
of bel: (416) 289-0706

Luister naar het programma **Zingend Geloven**

Toronto: CHIN FM 101
Elke Zaterdag 8:00 a.m.

Belleville: CJLX-FM 92.3 FM
Zondag 7:00 p.m.

Kingston: CFRC-FM 101.9 FM
Zondag 12:00 middag

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Miscellaneous

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Miscellaneous

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Are you travelling east or west? Stop in Thunder Bay and see our beautiful mountains, the famous Amethyst Mine, Terry Fox Lookout, Kekabeka Falls, Mount McKay, Old Fort William and much more. We have room for you in **The White House** conveniently located on Hwy. 11-17, 1 km from a Chr. Ref. Church. Peacefully quiet, furnished rooms have two double beds (can be divided by drapes), TV, microwave, fridge, private bathroom and everything you need in the kitchen. Rented per night or weekends. We are 8 km west of Thunder Bay on Hwy 11-17, and 17 km east of Kekabeka Falls. Look for signs on Hwy.
Your hosts: **Henny & Louis Van Ramshorst, R.R. #2, Thunder Bay, ON P7C 4V1.**
For reservation phone (807) 939-2746

The *most* news on the Netherlands and the Dutch in Canada and the USA.

the Windmill

Canada: P.O. Bag 9033, Surrey, BC V3T 4X3
USA: P.O. BOX 313, LYNDEN, WA 98264-0313
Ph. (604) 532-1733
Fax (604) 532-1734

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Events

FRISIAN PICNIC

MONDAY, JULY 1, 1996
starting at 11 a.m.
at Pinehurst Conservation Park, Paris, Ont.
on Highway 24A (4 miles north of Paris).

Miscellaneous

Alton Lodges

Family resort, clean housekeeping cottages, very close to 9 miles of sandy beach, excellent golf courses, fishing and many other attractions.

For information contact:
Len & Rita Bette
459 Mosley St.
Wasaga Beach, ON L0L 2P0
Phone: (705) 429-2420

Faculty Position

Dordt College is seeking a **Christian academician for a regular teaching position in a CSWE-accredited Social Work program** beginning in January 1997. The position will be filled either January or August 1997. Responsibilities include teaching in all program areas with a focus on macro-practice and research. An MSW with a minimum of two years post-MSW supervised experience is required. A doctorate in social work or related fields is preferred. Teaching experience in an accredited social work program is desirable.

Qualified persons committed to a Reformed, biblical perspective and educational philosophy are encouraged to send a letter of interest and curriculum vitae to Dr. Rockne McCarthy; mailing address:

498 4th Avenue NE;
Sioux Center, IA 51250-1697
telephone: (712) 722-6333
fax: (712) 722-4496
e-mail:vpaa@dordt.edu.

Dordt College is an equal opportunity institution and encourages the nominations and candidacies of woman and minorities.

Calendar of Events

Please submit only brief items. Placement is subject to space availability. Lengthy, multiple-event announcements will be rejected. We reserve the right to edit the material and to charge a nominal, per issue fee per item inserted.

June 15 24th Annual "Grunneger Picnic," 10 a.m., Grand River Conservation Area, **Rockwood**, Ont. For info. contact Harry Klungel, 505 Pinewood Ave., Exeter, ON N0M 1S1

June 19 Snowbirds, please note! The Cypress Garden Winter Ministry (Winterhaven, Fl.) picnic will be held at 10 a.m., Southside Park, **Woodstock**, Ont. Info.: (519) 285-2904.

July 8-26 "Summer School," sponsored by Wycliffe College and ICS. Theme: "...bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God" (Col.1:10) At ICS, **Toronto**, Ont. Info.: Chris Barrigar (416) 979-2870 or fax (416) 979-0471 (#).

July 14 Dutch worship service led by Rev. J. Kuntz, 3 p.m., CRC, **Ancaster**, Ont.

July 17 An evening of entertainment with former wrestler, Jake ("The Snake") Roberts. "His thrilling testimony is something you don't want to miss." At 7 p.m., Kennedy Road Tabernacle, 141 Kennedy Rd., **Brampton**, Ont. Info.: Bill Morgan at (905) 677-1846. Freewill offering.

Aug. 25 Dutch worship service led by Rev. Henry R. ...e Boister, p.m., CRC, **Ancaster**, Ont.

Profile

Future looks bright for young Christian pitcher

... continued from page 20

would send him if he chooses to sign.

Chris might start off with "rookie ball," then move through the Single-, Double- and Triple-A "farm system" of minor league baseball. Being drafted high doesn't guarantee a career in the major leagues, but it's a hope for three to five years down the road.

He believes that his future career, whether or not it ends up with a major league baseball team, will continue to be in God's hands and will provide opportunities for him to profess his faith.

Pastor Mike Reitsma agrees that his family is striving to "seek first the kingdom of God" through the whole process. God "has given us amazing peace and comfort, even when there's a lot of pressure."

On his own but not alone

Even though Chris is delaying university for the time being, he still sees it as an option during the off-season or in the future. Other challenges ahead involve heading out on his own: "I'll have to get my own apartment," he says. "And just being away from my family and my church and my girlfriend — that'll be tough."

Nineteen-year-old Janelle de-Groot agrees: "I think there'll be a lot of big phone bills," she says. "It's going to be weird that he'll be starting this profession while I'm still in university."

But she's excited about the opportunity as well. "I love it that Chris can have an experience like this, and that I can experience it through him, too," she says.

What about the money in baseball? Chris notes, "In the minor leagues, you basically get paid for your food and your apartment, but your signing bonus is in the bank." As for major league salaries, Chris says that "if I were ever fortunate enough to get that type of money, it doesn't mean I have to keep it all." He talks about "using that money, spreading it out," and keeping God in the picture.

The future lies ahead. "God has given me some gifts and I'm just going out and doing my best with them," says Chris.

The scouting game

CINDY BRUIN

Jim Reeves, of the New York Mets, was one of many professional baseball scouts to be clocking the speed of Chris Reitsma's pitches.

Cindy Bruin

CALGARY — How do baseball teams assess the players they hope to sign? Chris Reitsma experienced first-hand the intensity of baseball scouting. "Each team is represented by one area scout," explains Chris. "If that scout sees you and really likes you, he'll bring in his higher-up." Four or five scouts from each team came to Calgary throughout May to watch Chris pitch.

You'd think it would be a little intimidating to be pitching with up to 35 radar guns pointed at the ball you're throwing. But Chris shrugs it off. "It doesn't really make me nervous," he says. "You sort of get used to it."

But the scouting doesn't stop on the baseball field. Most of the scouts have also visited the Reitsma home and interviewed Chris's parents as well. "They want to know the background of the player," says Chris's mother, Ruth. Scouts try to get a sense of the kind of personality a player has, down to "the pictures you have on the fridge."

That was the source of a lot of pressure on the Reitsma family, too. But Chris's father, Mike, says, "We've consciously given it to the Lord, and he's given us a great deal of comfort and peace."

We love early birds!

Renew your CC subscription now!

Our Circulation Manager is at her job every day trying to keep our subscriptions up to date. We spend thousands of dollars each year in postage sending out renewal notices, reminders, etc. To top it off, Canada Post charges us an extra fee for using the handy business-reply envelopes we make available. **This means that in order to get a subscription renewed we have to pay close to $1.00 in postage alone!**

The computer label on your *Christian Courier* copy shows the month in which your subscription is due. If your label shows that your subscription is due two or three months from now, *kindly consider sending us the renewal fee ahead of time.* This way, you will be assured that C.C. will be coming to you regularly, as well as saving us time and postage expenses!

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Profile

CRC youth pitches his way toward major league baseball

CINDY BRUIN PHOTOS

Chris Reitsma unwinds after a game

Cindy Bruin

CALGARY — It was May in Calgary, and the Calgary Babe Ruth Baseball League was in action.

On the pitcher's mound stood Chris Reitsma, 18-year-old student at Calgary Christian School.

In the stands were a group of people that fill out the cast in a drama that is playing with Chris at its centre. His parents, Mike and Ruth Reitsma — Chris's dad is a pastor at First Christian Reformed Church and his mom is a teacher at Calgary Christian School; Chris's girlfriend, Janelle deGroot, a fixture when she's home from King's University College in Edmonton where she's a student; and Chris's school friends; plus some little kids that he used to babysit.

Then there was the group of 30 or more professional baseball scouts with radar guns directed at Chris's every pitch. Clocking his fastball at 90 miles per hour or more, these scouts from every one of the 30 major league baseball teams came to Calgary throughout the month to check Chris out as a pitching prospect for the upcoming professional baseball draft.

"It's real exciting," admitted Chris before the draft. "You always dream about being drafted or being a professional athlete. Now it could be less than two weeks away."

"We talk a lot of baseball around our house," says Chris. Daily phone calls from scouts, agent hopefuls, and the media, as well as personal visits from scouts all build toward the anticipation of draft day.

D day

Move to June 4. Major league teams make their draft choices this day, starting at 11 a.m. Calgary time. Chris and his supporting cast wait excitedly by the phone.

The first round of draft choices proceeds. At noon Chris gets his phone call. "Congratulations, Chris, you're the newest member of the Boston Red Sox," a team representative tells him. Chosen 34th, Chris is a "sandwich pick" between the first and second round, the highest ever pick for a baseball player from Canada.

"We all hugged each other and cried a little," says Chris. "We were just all really happy."

"It was just great," he adds. "I'm a happy guy, although I'm a little numb right now. I'll be getting together with team representatives in the next couple of days to work out the details." And, assuming the Red Sox make Chris a good offer, he will head off to the beginning of a professional baseball career.

Ironically, Boston was allowed its sandwich pick because of a trade with the Blue Jays. Inexplicably, though Toronto had expressed interest in Chris and had three opportunities to acquire him, they passed.

A gift from God

Chris sees the "hand of God" in everything that has happened. "God has given me my ability and I can give it back to him," he says.

Chris strongly maintains that his ability to pitch is a "gift from God." And in spite of all the attention drawn to him, he is able to profess that "my gift is not more special than anyone else's," says Chris, "it's just that people like to watch me use my gift."

Chris acknowledges the value of growing up in a "good Christian family" and the support of his parents in developing his perspective. But he also points to a particular baseball game when he was 16 years old as an event "that definitely changed my life."

'It could have been me'

Because of a broken collar bone, Christ started the season late and ended up playing for the Calgary Blues rather than the provincial or national team. As a result, Chris was part of a tragic experience which touched this team at a game in Ontario in August 1994. Chris was on the pitcher's mound when lightning struck the field, killing his friend who played left field.

"I was warming up," says Chris, "when this huge bang went off. Everyone on the whole field, and even people in the stands, were down on the ground from the electric shock. I was the only one on the field who didn't feel a thing. I felt as if a barrier of protection was on top of me."

Chris notes that as a 6'5"-tall person standing on a two-foot high pitching mound, "really, that could so easily have been me." That experience put baseball and his pitching ability into perspective for him, assuming relative unimportance next to the reality of death.

Chris says that the week after that "was probably the toughest week of my life," as he questioned God's role in his friend's death. But Chris's faith proved to be a strong foundation, not only for himself, but for others.

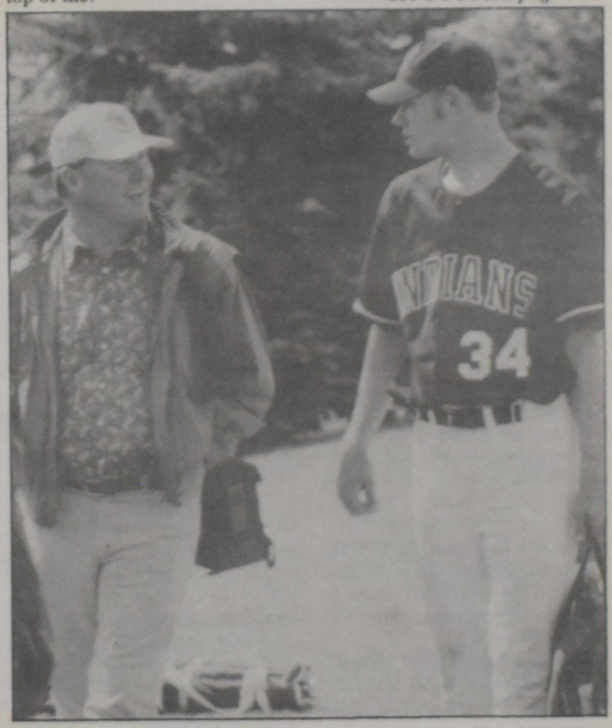
Ruth Reitsma, Chris's mother, says, "Other parents told us that Chris was a real spiritual support to the team; he was able to pray with them and was used by God."

Testifying to his faith

That focus on being used by God has continued in Chris's baseball experience. "Last year when I was on the national team I had the opportunity to give my testimony to a couple of the players I was rooming with," says Chris. He also shared his testimony with 150 junior high kids at a Christian camp.

The future holds bright hopes as well as challenges. As of draft day, Chris still didn't know about specific offers for a signing bonus, and where Boston

See **FUTURE** *page 19...*



Chris (right) talks with Jim Reeves, a scout for the New York Mets, after a game

A Canadian with an American start

Cindy Bruin

CALGARY — Chris Reitsma started playing Little League baseball at age 9 in Fresno, Calif., where he grew up and where his father was a pastor. Chris says it may have made a bit of a difference that he started in the United States, because of the weather. "But at that stage you don't know if you have any talent: you just go out there and have fun."

Chris says a lot of scouts were surprised that he would have moved to Canada, with a relatively short playing season. But that was part of being the son of a pastor.

Chris enjoys the fact that baseball is less of a big deal in Canada. In school, he says, "the spotlight on me hasn't really been on baseball, but more on basketball. People at school just don't really care that much about baseball, which is refreshing sometimes." Of course, Chris concedes that in the last couple of months, his friends have learned a lot more about the professional baseball scene.

As of draft day, being in Canada means that Chris has achieved a new landmark: highest draft pick for a Canadian player.

Chris's mother expressed some disappointment that Chris wasn't drafted by a Canadian team. But Chris himself states, "I honestly had no preference."